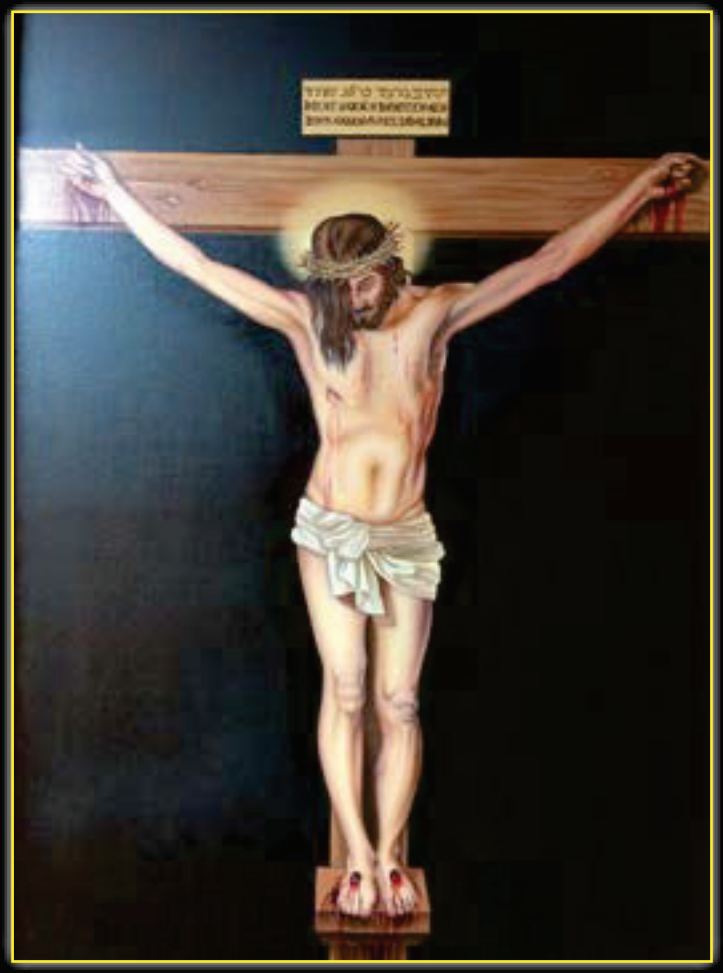
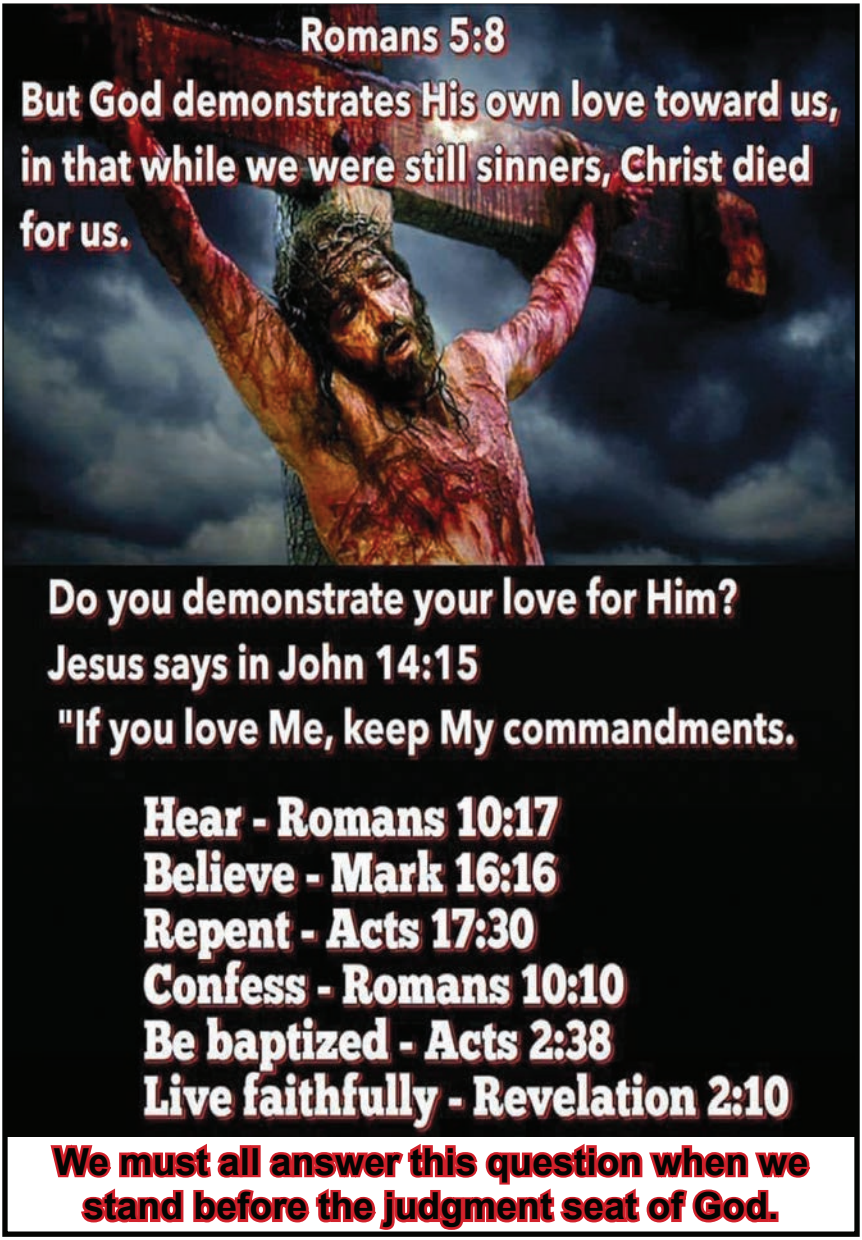
Volume One Hundred and Two

The Voice of Truth International





Front Cover art: Copy of Diego Velázquez's *Christ Crucified*, 1632, by Steven B. Choate.


Salvation is Better than Sin!
By RC Lupo 05/15/19
GOD
Fellowship: Walking with man
Happiness
Beauty
Sorrow
Eternal Life
All one could ever want or need
Eternal Death
Blessing
Love
Cursing
Tree of Life
All the world offers will pass away
Lake of Fire
Hatred
Joy
Ugliness
Fellowship: with God interrupted
Sadness
MAN
Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: (2) but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear."
Which would you rather have?

The Kingdom/Church Came at Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Acts 2:30-36,47).

"And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'" Mark 9:1

The Kingdom/Church of Jesus Christ

Daniel 2:44

"Then *cometh* the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and Power." 1 Corinthians 15:24

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall

NEVER BE DESTROYED

nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever!"

By RC Lupo
04/17/19

Jesus Delivers Kingdom/Church to Father at His Return. 1Co. 15:24

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



Placing Membership

Louis Rushmore

Some accommodative language doesn't appear in Scripture despite corresponding to biblical topics. For instance, though the word "trinity" doesn't appear in the Bible, what it represents is certainly taught in the Holy Writ—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:32-33; 1 Peter 1:2). The phrase "youth ministry" isn't in the Bible either, but many passages in both testaments address youth (Deuteronomy 6:2, 5-9; 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:22; Ephesians 6:4)—their responsibilities and especially parental responsibilities toward them.

"Placing membership" is another phrase that simply is absent from the pages of inspiration. Yet, it is apparent that each Christian has an obligation to a local congregation, as we will see. Someone converted by the Gospel might be assumed to be a new member of a local congregation of the Lord's church with which he or she has had contact leading up to his or her baptism. However, such an assumption or even knowledge of a member of the church moving into a community is not automatically acknowledged by either the individual or the local church.

It seems that some members of the church desire to get lost in the crowd and conceal themselves in anonymity when relocating to a new area of the country. Perhaps they want to be amenable to no eldership. They may consider themselves members at large—whatever that may be—but it is not a biblically defensible position. Maybe this sort of Christian does not want to shoulder any responsibility that would be associated with

a congregation. Brother Wayne Price refers to such ones as "suitcase Christians" (3), while brother Gus Nichols calls them "driftwood" (14).

Placing membership "…means to identify oneself with a/the local congregation. The phrase, of course, is not found in God's Holy and Divine Word, but the principle is certainly there" (Miller 4). In times past, the churches of Christ in America gave letters of recommendation to its members moving out of their communities, and churches of Christ entertaining the extension of membership to a new arrival from elsewhere would inquire of one's previous congregation. That was not only a prudent practice for those religiously enthusiastic about the practice of Christianity, but it was a biblically substantiated practice. We should be doing those things now, too.

> If all members would follow such a policy, the first eldership would know that they were no longer responsible for these sheep, while the second eldership would know that their job of watching after the welfare of their sheep was greater now. But at least both would know which sheep were in their flock! (Price 3)

In the first century, "often the disciples carried letters of commendation (Acts 18:27)" (Miller 4). "…Paul declared that some people need letters of commendation (2 Corinthians 3:1-3)" (Nichols 14). The apostle Paul, upon his first visit to Jerusalem following his conversion, needed a recommendation to the Jerusalem church. He found it in the person of Barnabas (Acts 9:26-27).

The apostle Paul was essentially attempting to place membership with the local congregation in Jerusalem. ***"And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple"*** (Acts 9:26 NKJV). "It is interesting that the word used in the original for 'cleave' in Matthew 19:5 is the same word used for 'to join' in Acts 9:26 and it means to 'become glued.' If Paul desired to 'become glued' to the local congregation, shouldn't we, as well?" (Miller 4). Regarding Acts 9:26, brother Dub McClish noted, "This passage describes the attempt by Saul of Tarsus to 'place membership' with the Jerusalem Church…" (677).

There are numerous additional biblical principles from which we can

know that Christians **ought** to place membership with a local congregation. Brother Dennis Gulledge notices some of these in this following excerpt.

> What is meant by the expression "place membership" as it pertains to a local congregation? We must admit that we cannot find that expression in the Bible. It may be for this reason that some think it an unscriptural concept. Is it? In Romans 16:1, Paul wrote, "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea." …Her sphere of activity was "the church of Cenchrea." She did not represent the "church at large" or "the church universal." The church in Cenchrea was a congregation of God's people in a specific locality, being a harbor town nine miles west of Corinth. …Paul addressed the church at Philippi saying, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (1:1). Saints are members who work together in that given locality. Bishops are elders or overseers of that local church (1 Timothy 3:1-7). Deacons are qualified servants in that congregation (1 Timothy 3:8-10). …



> Churches of Christ who have qualified men should have a plurality of elders overseeing the work of that congregation (Acts 1:23; Titus 1:5). These bishops are to shepherd the local flock. They do not have jurisdiction over any other congregation (Acts 20:28). …Is placing membership in a local church necessary? It is indeed! Is it scriptural? Absolutely! The New Testament teaches that we are to be in a congregation, subject to the leadership of the elders, involved in that work and supportive of the Lord's cause in that place. (4-5)

Acts 20:28 instructs elders to shepherd the flock that is among them,

but how can they do that if they are unsure who are the sheep for which they are responsible to God? The sheep have a responsibility to their elders (Hebrews 13:7), and the shepherds have a responsibility to give an account for those sheep (Hebrews 13:17) to the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). "… It's hard at times for them [elders] to even figure out WHO is in their flock, and who isn't" (Price 3).

Furthermore, "if there isn't some way of **identifying** who's in the local family and who is not, how can we appoint elders and deacons, select teachers…?" (Futrell 2). Afterall, church leaders and workers are supposed to be selected from among the members of a local congregation (Acts 6:3).

Placing membership, though the specific phrase is not in Scripture, is nevertheless most assuredly taught directly and indirectly. Placing membership is taught in so many words as well as in principle so that no Christian ought to be without membership in one of the churches of Christ.

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Acts 20:28 instructs elders to shepherd the flock that is among them, but how can they do that if they are unsure who are the sheep for which they are responsible to God? The sheep have a responsibility to their elders (Hebrews 13:7), and the shepherds have a responsibility to give an account for those sheep (Hebrews 13:17) to the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). However, it's hard at times for elders to even figure out who is in their flock and who isn't.



Would You Ask Jesus To Leave?

Jerry Bates

We read in Luke 8:26-39 of an interesting episode in the life of Jesus. Jesus and His disciples disembarked from a boat on the Sea of Galilee after spending a terror-filled stormy night during which the disciples thought they were surely going to die. However, Jesus spoke and calmed the winds and the seas. After arriving in the country of the Gadarenes, one of the first people they met was a man possessed by many demons. This man lived in the tombs and apparently possessed superhuman strength, since he broke the chains with which people sometimes bound him. Jesus healed the man and allowed the demons to go into a herd of swine, which caused the herd, about 2,000 head (Mark 5:13), to run off a cliff into the sea and drown.

While we might wonder why this occurred, who were the demons or have other questions, I want us to briefly look at the response of the people. After seeing what had occurred, we find that the people were afraid and wanted Jesus to leave the country. The Scriptures tell us that after the people saw the healed man sitting with Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid (8:35, 37). They were not afraid of thousands of animals killing themselves. They were not afraid of a demon possessed man who lived naked in the tombs. However, what did frighten them was this possessed man clothed and in his right mind (8:35). What frightened them was that this man who was evil, became good. What frightened them was the holy, not the unholy. As a matter of fact, they were so afraid they wanted Jesus to leave. There is no mention of any rejoicing over the good fortune of the

healed man. No mention appears in the text of any amazement at the great power of Jesus.



We might think that the people would rejoice over the power of Jesus even over the evil spirits. Likely, this man was not the only demon possessed man. Almost certainly, there were many people afflicted with various ailments; however, instead of bringing their sick to Jesus, they asked Him to depart (8:37).

While most would find these actions completely inexplicable, this should not surprise us. Unfortunately, this is how mankind usually responds to God and His righteousness. In the Garden of Eden, Adam freely walked with God until he and Eve sinned. The Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus, even though He had done nothing wrong. Jesus was condemned because He spoke against the evil of the religious people and spoke of God's love and forgiveness for everyone.

The same is true even in our modern world. We have become too comfortable with evil. Societies around the world are filled with violence, drug and alcohol abuse, broken homes, and diseases caused by immorality.

Yet, we do not blush and are not afraid. However, let someone write or speak out in the name of Christ or let him point out that sin is the problem and righteousness is the solution, and the community wants him to be quiet. He is castigated for being unloving and intolerant. The world is afraid of righteousness and wants the man of God to be quiet. Consequently, we as Christians are often afraid to speak against evil.

Even though Jesus obviously could have stayed in Gadara and forced the people to accept Him, He did not do that. He willingly left, but He did not leave without a witness. The man who had been healed begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus commissioned him to ***"go and tell what great things the Lord has done for you"*** (Luke 8:39). He traveled throughout the whole province of Decapolis publicizing his good news. Apparently, this man was very successful in his preaching, because sometime later, Jesus returned to the region, and this time, the people were eager to hear Him (Luke 8:40).

We are today in a similar situation. Jesus has left the earth, but He has not left the world without a witness. No, we cannot personally tell what Jesus has done like the man in our narrative could. Nevertheless, we can and must tell the story of Jesus. Jesus has given us the Great Commission to go and preach the Gospel to every creature (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). If His servants do not tell the story of the cross, who will?

Too often, Christians are intimidated by the world and are reluctant to tell others about what Jesus has done. I cannot imagine this man being intimidated. Undoubtedly, he spoke with enthusiasm and conviction. He had been suffering unimaginably, but now he was whole as a result of the power of Jesus. I feel sure that everyone heard of his good fortune. We have not been suffering physically, but we all suffer something far more serious, the guilt and bondage of sin. Why are we reluctant to tell how we have been delivered from a fate far worse than this man's affliction? If we are reluctant to tell others, perhaps we have failed to truly understand the meaning of Calvary. The demons who afflicted this man were terrified of the punishment that awaits them (James 2:19). Without Christ, we all await the same fate. However, through Calvary, we have been set free. A proper understanding and appreciation of this gift should move us to tell the world about what Christ has done. May we all fulfill our commission as this man fulfilled his commission!



1932-2008

A Letter to Parents

J.C. Choate

Dear Daddy and Mother,

Your children were given to you out of God's goodness and mercy. You did not have to do as Hannah did; you did not promise to give your child to God, but even so, that should be your aim.

It is your responsibility to ***"train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it"*** (Proverbs 22:6). Do you realize that now, while they are young, the foundation for their lives is being built? The things they learn to do and to love now, they will do and love later. That is why it is so important we make religion such a major part of their lives so that if it were taken away, they would have only a shell left.

In so many cases today, both parents have full-time jobs outside the home. Do you feel that your work takes up so much time that you do not have any left to spend studying God's Word with your children? In the short evening hours there is dinner to prepare, laundry to be done, homework to be supervised, sports practice and activities that take large blocks of time, and on and on and on. Where is the time for heart-to-heart talks or for family Bible study? Which is more important? So many times the work can wait, but that is not true with the children. They will grow up and soon feel that they know all about life, but theirs are lives without real knowledge of God and dedication to Him. Then, your influence for good will be gone; you will have lost your chance to raise a soul for God.

Who is to blame if a child is brought up in a home where religion is never mentioned except for Sundays and Wednesday nights (maybe), and



then he goes unprepared to the worship services? Do you talk with your children about what they have learned in Bible class? Do you help them with memory verses? If there is a conflict between some school activity and an activity of the church, which is put first? Do you constantly talk with them about sports or some video game that they are playing, showing by your emphasis that those things are uppermost in your mind, and that their development in spiritual things is only incidental?

By your example and through heart-to-heart talks with them, do you teach your children that loving God and putting Him first must not only be their focus in life, but that it is their safeguard in the dangerous world in which they live? If they learn how important it is to live pure lives as teenagers, not to be involved with drugs or immoral relationships, they will be protected from many of Satan's temptations and the terrible consequences of falling prey to them. It is vital that Christian parents equip their children with a strong spiritual emphasis so that they will not be attacked and overcome by the worldliness all around them.

Are you, as parents, safeguarding your children from becoming friends with others who will influence them in all the wrong ways? It is one thing

if you, as parents, try to help your children aid troubled peers by allowing them to experience Christian homelife, taking them with your children to Bible classes and Bible camps, but don't let your children go unsupervised into their broken world. That lack of parenting can result in eternal disaster.

Are you teaching your children from an early age not only to always put God first in their lives but also to look toward marriage with one who is a faithful part of the Lord's church? Is it after the children grow to be men and women, marry unbelievers (many times) and finally, in numerous cases, drift away from God and the church that we realize our mistake? Oh, but then it is too late, and all our prayers, tears and regrets can seldom undo the eternal harm that has been done. Yes, sometimes that non-Christian mate can be won to Christ, but often the opposite happens. The Christian's falling away from God will likely mean that their children, their children and their children will never be a part of God's family! How many generations may be doomed eternally because parents failed to teach their children of the grave importance of marrying only in the Lord?

Even in Christian homes, what percentage of children leave the church and God when they leave for college or go out on their own? Statistics say the number is about two-thirds, and only a small percentage of them ever come back. What reasons do they give for such monumental changes in their lives?

First, their exposure to religion has seemed shallow to them; so make sure that your children learn that dedication to God is the very heart of life. **Second,** parents must combat the atheistic teachings children learn in school, that evolution and all of its lies are the answers to nullify every belief in God and the Bible. Evolution is a total lie, scientifically, but parents must study the subject thoroughly with their children so that they can be protected. **Third,** sexual immorality promoted as "normal" in every form of entertainment and among their peers can become their way of life, too. Urgent teaching must be done to guard against this tragedy. **Fourth,** their closest relationships may be in the world, not in the church. As a result, they go with the world.

So many times children do not realize how important religion is, and if the truth is not instilled in them while they are young, they may never be faithful Christians. So, for your children's sake and yours, won't you see to it that God is the central part of your homelife? Remember, their souls are at stake.

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5-Minute Bible Study

Idle Words

Paula Bates

1. But I say to you that for every _____ word men may speak, they will give _____ of it in the day of judgment. For by your _____ you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Matthew 12:36-37

2. There is one who _____ like the _____ of a word. But the _____ of the wise promotes health. Proverbs 12:18

3. Neither filthiness, nor _____ talking, nor _____ jesting, which are not _____, but rather giving of thanks. Ephesians 5:4

4. You shall not take the _____ of the Lord your God in _____, for the Lord will not hold him _____ who takes His name in vain. Exodus 20:7

5. So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be _____ to hear, _____ to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the _____ of God. James 1:19-20

Answers:

1. Idle, account, words
2. Speaks, piercings, tongue
3. Foolish, coarse, fitting
4. Name, vain, guiltless
5. Swift, slow, righteousness

Kindness or Severity

Robert Johnson

There are those who believe that the God of the Old Testament must be different from the God of the New Testament. They reason this because it seems to them the God of the Old Testament was vengeful as well as willing to quickly condemn and slaughter thousands of people. The God revealed in the New Testament, however, is perceived to be loving, caring, and a God of love and mercy. Of course, the truth is that God is merciful in both Old and New testaments, as well as a God who recompenses sin in both Old and New testaments.

For example, one of my favorite passages from the Old Testament reflects this. ***"The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them"*** (Numbers 6:22-27). God was not breathing fire and brimstone here, but wanting Israel to know He chose them, He loves them, and He desires to bless them as His people. Even those times when it seems He was acting harshly against them, He was discipling them to encourage them to leave sin behind, along with the judgment it brings. Even in all this, God found no joy in the condemnation sin brings. ***"Say to them, 'As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"*** (Ezekiel 33:11).

Certainly, we are familiar with the passages in the New Testament that speak of God's love, grace and mercy. ***"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly***

places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6). Sin, however, is still hated by God, and those who reject Him to make sin a lifestyle will have to deal with its consequences. ***"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him"*** (John 3:36). ***"There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek"*** (Romans 2:9).

So, how do we reconcile this conundrum some have created about the nature of God? The answer lies not with God, but with us. If we humble ourselves before Him and submit to His will, we will experience His love and kindness, His mercy and grace, His help and strength, and ultimately His salvation. If we reject His good will, then there is condemnation and punishment; it is ours to choose. You see, God revealed the depth of His love and the extent He loves us by sending His Son to die for our sins. It is the greatest expression of love the world will ever know. How precious a gift Jesus is to us! Yet, if we reject this gift, if we snub Christ, we reject the only avenue by which God's love is available (Romans 8:39). In this case, what else is available other than God's judgment? God doesn't desire any of us to perish, but He does call us to repent, to abandon sin and to submit to His good will instead (2 Peter 3 :9).

Yes, whether one experiences God's love or judgment is one's own choice. Some say such isn't fair. It's infinitely fair, as everyone who chooses God finds life, and everyone who chooses sin finds judgment. There is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11). We shouldn't blame God for our poor choices, but we should praise Him for His indescribable gift. Which do you choose? Your choice determines how God responds. ***"Therefore, consider God's kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God's kindness toward you—if you remain in His kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off"*** (Romans 11 :22).

Robert Johnson preaches for the Lord's church in Longview, Texas, USA.

God is merciful in both Old and New testaments, as well as a God who recompenses sin in both Old and New testaments.

JESUS WAS DIFFERENT

Gary C. Hampton



Numerous religious groups look to a dynamic personality to set their beliefs in motion. None, however, has a leader like Jesus.

Jesus was ***"God with us."*** The angel told Joseph that the child Mary was expecting was a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:18-25). John added to our understanding when he told about the Word that was with God at the beginning and was God. He was the one who walked among men, displaying the Glory of the ***"only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"*** (John 1:1-2, 14).

Our Leader controlled the elements. He actually was the Creator. ***"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made"*** (John 1:3). The apostles awakened our Lord in the midst of a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee. ***"Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there***

was a great calm" (Mark 4:36-41).

Our Lord offered love to His enemies by coming to die for them (Romans 5:6-11). He also commanded His followers to do the same (Matthew 5:44). The mocking mob before the cross heard Him pray, ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"*** (Luke 23:34).

Judas, the Lord's betrayer, recognized that our Master was sinless (Matthew 27:4). Pilate agreed with him (Luke 23:14b-15a). One of the thieves hanging with him referred to the unjust nature of the tortuous death the Lord endured (Luke 23:39-41).

The greatest distinction between our King and other religious leaders is His ability to save. The Revelation describes Jesus Christ as the One ***"who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"*** (Revelation 1:5). We become sons of God by putting Jesus on in baptism (Galatians 3:26-27). He delivered the promise of eternal life (1 John 2:24-25).

Never doubt Jesus is different from all others who claim to be leading people on a great, spiritual journey. That difference should inspire us to follow Him!

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

Robison's Rubies

The message of Jesus Christ is a message of selflessness and service. It is a message about Deity (the Son of God) coming and sharing in human flesh, with all its sufferings and temptations. Although He could rightly claim equality with God, He came to live and die like a man. Glory came upon Him only after He suffered and ***"learned obedience by the things which He suffered"*** (Hebrews 5:8). His life was and is a living message of absolute, complete and total humility and self-sacrifice. He said on one occasion, ***"For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"*** (Mark 10:45). That is just one of the many beautiful reasons for serving Him.

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GOD

And He Appeared

Cecil May Jr.



The Gospel, as defined in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, consists in the facts ***"that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas…"*** What is often cited as three facts of the Gospel are actually four: Christ died, was buried, was raised and appeared. First Corinthians proceeds to name others who saw Him also. That He appeared is what enabled Peter to say on Pentecost, ***"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses"*** (Acts 2:32).

In writing Acts, Luke said Jesus presented Himself alive to the apostles ***"after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God"*** (Acts 1:3). Among the ***"many proofs"*** of the resurrection are the fact of the empty tomb and the reliability of the eyewitnesses.

The witnesses to Jesus' resurrection are for the most part men who had

traveled, eaten, conversed and slept in His and one another's company for a period of about three years. They would hardly have been fooled by an imposter. They were men who were fearful, not believing that He would rise from the dead as He had said, running away from His accusers lest they be accused. However, after seeing the risen Lord, they were transformed and emboldened.

Peter, who had trembled before a servant girl and denied he had even known the Lord, after the resurrection challenged the same Sanhedrin that had condemned Jesus to death.

Peter, who had trembled before a servant girl and denied he had even known the Lord, after the resurrection challenged the same Sanhedrin that had condemned Jesus to death with the words, ***"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20) and "We must obey God rather than men"*** (Acts 5:29).

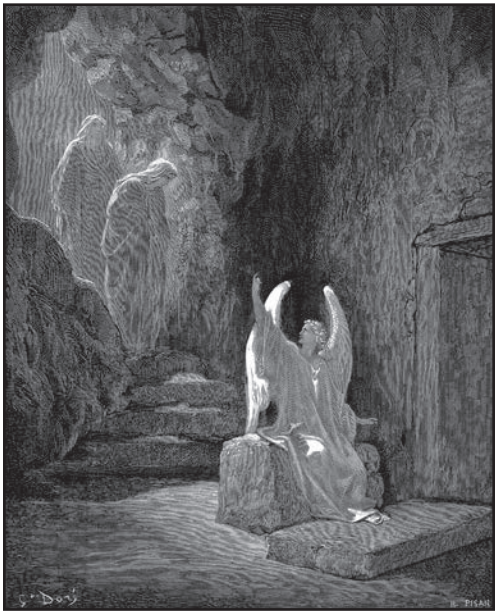
Saul, an ardent Jewish persecutor of Christians, after witnessing Jesus' resurrection by seeing him alive ***"as to one untimely born,"*** became Paul the apostle, even more ardently a preacher of the Gospel of the risen Christ. In spite of beatings and stonings, he preached all across the Roman Empire. He told the Thessalonians, ***"But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict"*** (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2).

Such a change of heart, from frightened skeptics in the case of the twelve and from a dedicated and violent opponent in the case of Paul, to emboldened and effective evangelists, courageously facing even death to preach what they obviously and fervently believed to be true, requires an explanation, a cause adequate to produce such an unlikely effect. The only reasonable explanation is that they saw what they said they saw. ***"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses"*** (Acts 2:32).

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What Happened When Jesus Died?

Tom Baxley



We know that when Jesus died, His body went into the tomb, and His soul descended into Hades. On the third day, He arose from death and emerged from the tomb. It is important to remember that Hades and Hell are not the same place, according to Luke 16:9-31. What happened while Jesus was in Hades? We don't have a detailed account of what He did while there, but one thing we know is that the trip was necessary in order to fulfill prophecy (Psalm 16:10) and also to take death captive, which included acquiring the keys to death and Hades. Ephesians 4:8 (ASV) states that He lead captivity captive. Picture a victorious general returning to the capital and being led by his prisoners. When Jesus ascended, He conquered death, and it became His captive. Finally, note how Jesus described Himself in Revelation 1:17-18. ***"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."*** This is why the resurrection is the day that changed the world!

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The Anchor

Betty Burton Choate

Emotions wax and wane,
Even the emotions that say
I feel Your nearness,
Or that You seem so far away.

Emotions—built on joy
When life is full,
And gifts of Your outpouring
Rain on my heart adoring,
And all is oh so well.

Emotions—built on need
When lacerations cut my soul,
When, in answer to my tears,
Silence echoes in my ears
And nothing in my world seems well.

But with this finite mind
What can I know?
Of what You know and what You do?
What can I see
With these eyes,
Blinded by mortality?

The answers cannot lie within myself;
No vision of the whole
Illuminates my soul;
Emotions cannot tell
That all is lost or all is well;

They blow about
With winds of change
And, in the end, they fail.

What can I do?
My soul must have an anchor strong,
A bedrock sure to rest upon;
But not *my feelings*
—Emotions are too weak—
And not *my sight*
—Your face I cannot see—
But in Your word are promises
Made by my God Who cannot lie,
***You* Who say I am Your own,**
***You* have pledged in black and white:**
"*Fear not*
For I am *with you;*
Be not *dismayed*
For *I am your God.*
I will *strengthen* you;
Yes, I will *help* you,
I will *uphold* *you*
With *My righteous right hand."**

Your word is sure.
Past emotion's winds,
When hopes ascend
and doubts descend.
It will endure,
It will endure!

***Isaiah 49:10**

Before the Revelation

"There is…one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all'" (Ephesians 4:4, 6).

Betty Burton Choate

We fought our way through dense jungle growth, unable even to see the ground beneath our feet. Huge trees, vines, bushes and grasses formed the lush layers of rain forest, seemingly separating us by thousands of miles and aeons of time from civilization.

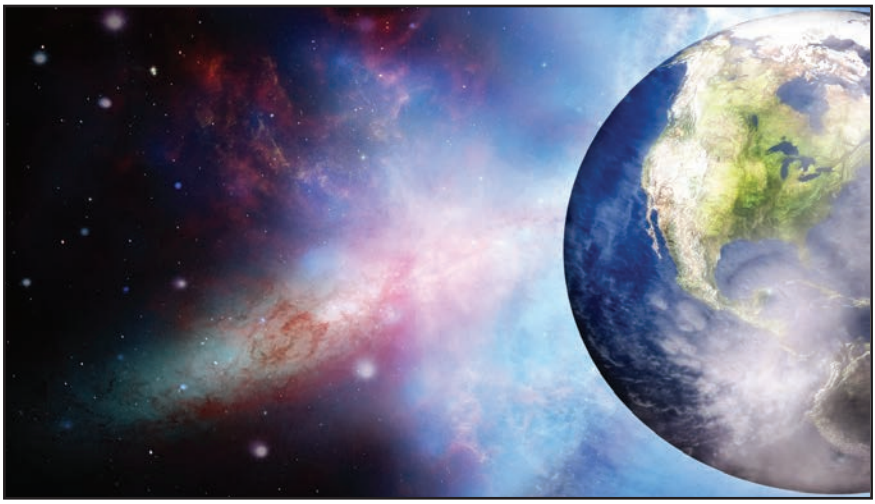


Suddenly we came to an ornately carved doorway. Passing through, we were stunned by the scene before us: an ancient city of unbelievable size and beauty, created, abandoned and swallowed by the encroaching jungle.

We walked, almost as on hallowed ground, marvelling at the ambition of the builders, examining their intricate carvings in stone, wondering, as we studied its mute remains, ***"Who did this? When? How?*** What kind of people were they? What was their history? From where did they come? What happened to them? How did they learn to construct such majestic buildings? What was the story being told by the carved images? What could be learned about the builders and inhabitants of this city?"

The Lost City

If we could travel through the universe, with no former knowledge of what exists, and could pass from one unhabitable planet to the next, from a blazing star to the cold deadness of a moon, passing through endless light years of space and aeons of time, and seeing not one evidence of life, what would we think?



Then, what would we think to suddenly burst through the earth's atmosphere to find teeming life everywhere? Not only *life, as an unformed and useless thing,* **but life in millions of diverse, complicated, and highly developed forms are everywhere?**

"Who did this?" "Where is he?" "What kind of being could do such things as have never been seen or even dreamed of before?" "WHO did this?"

Yes, the question would be automatic, even without forethought: ***"WHO DID THIS?"***

As with the archaeologist considering the lost city, automatically and without any doubt, we would be forced to **begin** with *the assumption* that ***some Being or Beings,*** necessarily *more intelligent* and *more powerful* than all that we could see around us, **must** have made those things.

Just as the archaeologist cannot immediately know the identity and the history of the people who created a hidden or buried city, so we would not be able to identify, merely from looking, the Creator of everything before our eyes. ***Yet, in all honesty, could the existence of the one Creator be any more certain than the other?*** Why will we readily accept the fact that "manmade" things prove the existence of a creating man, though we do not see him or even his skeletal remains?

- because the evidence **demands** it,
- because we readily **recognize the undeniable evidence of human intelligence** in what we see,
- because we **know that nothing else in existence is capable of making such things as humans make.**

And Life???

When we walked through the majestic ruins of the ancient city, the interesting thing is that there was no life anywhere! Yes, obviously, living, intelligent humans constructed everything in sight, but nothing ***lived***. Without years of intense research, archaeologists might never have answers to the questions of "Who did this?" and "What happened to this civilization?"

But when we look at the world that surrounds us, ***everywhere*** we see ***life!*** Plants, animals, humans—from WHERE did ***LIFE*** come? As

intelligent and creative as humans are, no human has ever been able to take a non-living object and breathe life into it! ***WHO*** has the power of ***LIFE?***

We would not know the answer to the question if the Creator Himself had not revealed everything in the Book we call the Bible. Can you imagine the bewilderment with which all of us would live continually if we had not been blessed with this account of creation's history? Even though non-believers have spent their lives maligning and discrediting this Book, its knowledge and guidance have shaped all that is good in civilization, and wherever it has been ignored, people have suffered unspeakable wrongs.

"In the beginning God…" (Genesis 1:1). ***God is life!*** When He formed man, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul! (Genesis 2:7).

Instead of believing God's own account of His creation, atheists fabricated the doctrine of "evolution," which is used to explain away the necessity for a Creator. The world is taught, "There is no God! Everything developed on its own, from nothing!" Much of the world believes it, even though **nobody has ever seen something develop from nothing, and no one has ever seen a non-living thing turn itself into a vibrant living entity capable of developing complex cells and replacing them when they die.** ***This is the greatest fairy tale and hoax ever perpetrated on humanity!***

Each day, as a new world of discovery, we are allowed to open our eyes to the wonders of all that exists. Every day of our lives we've seen life in millions of forms all around us—trees, myriads of flowers, colorful birds, animals and insects of all sorts: grotesque, comical, cruel and useful.

We've seen the cycle of humans from birth to death,so incessantly repeated before our eyes that no sense of amazement remains! All these wonders *are* wonders beyond even the comprehension of the marvel that is called the human brain are so taken for granted that they are hardly *seen!*

We are surrounded by a creation that continually cries out the existence of its Creator (Romans 1:20), but do we pause in our busy lives to feel the wonder of being a part of God's handiwork? Not just "a part," but do we understand that we are *the pinnacle* of creation—***living souls, made in God's image and promised immortality with Him, if we obey Him?***

The Total Solar Eclipse Designed by God

David R. Kenney

A solar eclipse is when moon is between the earth and sun. (A lunar eclipse is when the earth is between the moon and sun.) There are distinct types of solar eclipses: partial, annular, total and annular-total. There are 2-5 solar eclipses each year, but not all are viewable to us because of the rotational position of the Earth. What we witnessed on August 21, 2017 was a total solar eclipse. The last time one could observe a total solar eclipse in the United States was 1979, and the next solar eclipse to be viewable in the United States will be April 8, 2024. While I did not observe the eclipse, since my eyes are very sensitive to light, I did enjoy many pictures posted by friends on social media celebrating their view of this natural phenomenon. It sure was an exciting demonstration of God's design of the universe!

The sun, earth and moon all travel an orbit. The moon travels around the Earth at 2,288 mph, and it completes an orbit in about 28 days (a sidereal month). The earth travels around the sun at about 67,000 mph in its orbit, and it completes its orbit in about 365.256 days (a sidereal year). The sun travels 483,000 mph its orbit in the Milky Way Galaxy, and it is estimated to complete its orbit in about 225 million years (a cosmic year).

I was thinking about these rates of speed, time, orbits and the moments when these all align as I was looking at my wristwatch. My watch has an hour hand, a minute hand and a second hand. These hands all move at various rates of speed. Much like the solar eclipse, all three hands are in alignment at times (at noon and midnight). Although the trajectories of some heavenly bodies are far more complex than one could capture on a wristwatch, I am constantly amazed at the intricate design of the universe.

It reminds me of William Paley's classic argument for the existence of God based on design or the teleological argument. Although timepieces

have been used in analogies by others, William Paley is generally attributed to be the one who popularized the watch/watchmaker analogy. Paley spoke of walking in the woods and his foot came across several stones that did not catch his notice. Then, he came across a watch! He admired the watch's intricacies, which produces motion, keeps track of time and has interacting complex parts inside—wheels with teeth or gears. It is made of varied materials for differing purposes: glass—to see through; brass—to avoid rust; steel—to form elastic springs, etc. Paley then made this observation. "The inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker, that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction and designed its use" (11).

The apostle Paul wrote, ***"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened"*** (Romans 1:20-21 NKJV). The solar eclipse that many people stared into the sky to see was yet another demonstration of His invisible attributes! Sadly, some will continue to refuse to see Him, even as they stare up at evidence before their eyes. There is an expression that rings true: "There are none so blind as those who will not see." Many were fascinated while watching the total solar eclipse of 2017. By God's design, we knew the eclipse was coming, the pathway for viewing it and how long it would last. Where there is design, there must be a designer. When the design is so intelligent and intricate, the designer must be even more so! Great is our God!

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Nourished in the Words of Faith

Marilyn LaStrape

Paul, writing to his son in the faith regarding what the Holy Spirit in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 said in verse 6, ***"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed."***

The *Truth for Today Commentary* on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus was written by David L. Roper. His observations are so plainly stated on verse 6, help would be needed to misunderstand his point.

> When we consider God's Word as nourishment, many thoughts come to mind. To be nourished by food it is not enough to look at it or examine it. The food must be chewed, swallowed, and then digested. Even so, to be nourished by God's Word, it is not enough to do a casual reading of a few verses now and then. We need to read the Bible, study it, meditate on it, and apply it to our lives. In this way, we show that [we] have digested the words of faith.

What is faith? It is defined in Hebrews 11:1. ***"Now faith is the substance [realization] of things hoped for, the evidence [confidence] of things not seen."*** Is faith necessary? Hebrews 11:6 answers with a resounding, "Yes!" ***"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."***

Nourished in the words of faith—what does that mean? To be nourished in the words of faith means the Bible must be read, believed and obeyed. How does this faith come that brings about nourishment of the soul? ***"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"*** (Romans 10:17). Faith comes through hearing the Word of God, and that one and only inerrant source is the Bible.

How is being nourished in the words of faith done? To be nourished in the words of faith occurs through Bible reading, study, prayer, meditation

and submission. **Reading and study** of Scripture is imperative to the serious student of the Word. ***"Study to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"*** (2 Timothy 2:15). **Prayer** is the lifeblood of communication with God. ***"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"*** (Philippians 4:6). **Meditation** is that exercise of the mind contemplating biblical truths that makes it possible for us to turn those infallible truths into owned conviction. Psalm 119:15 reads, ***"I will meditate on your precepts*** [God's rules prescribed to us] and contemplate [look into] ***Your ways."*** **Submission** to the will of God in every aspect of our lives is the divine, crowning and lasting accomplishment to being nourished in the words of faith. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion prayed, ***"O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done"*** (Matthew 26:42).

What are some of the manifestations of being nourished in the words of faith?

- **Bringing of every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.** ***"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*** [of the flesh] ***but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"*** (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Lord's church is not in a war to conquer anything worldly, but to turn people in the world from darkness to light. Nobody knows what is in one's mind until he or she opens his or her mouth. The need to guard our thoughts and words is paramount as we strive to speak God's truth in love.
- **An absolute break in willful wandering from the Word of God.** Psalm 119:10 reads, ***"With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments."*** Christians are ever so sensitive to the presence of God and order their thoughts, words and actions accordingly.
- **A constant yielding to the teaching and discipline of God.** Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 5:8-9 reads, ***"though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."*** God's teaching and discipline effectively work in those living in obedient faith.
- **An intense incompatibility with sin.** First John 3:8-9 reads, ***"He who***

sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." Christians are no longer ruled by the practice of sin but rather choose to walk in righteousness to the glory of God.

- **A profound maturing of attitude and character through difficult or traumatic experiences.** James 1:2-4 reads, ***"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*** [endurance]. ***But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing."*** **Our joy is not dependent on the absence of trouble; our joy is dependent on the presence of God.**
- **A relentless denouncing of the sinful deeds of the body.** Romans 8:13-14 reads, ***"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."*** The Holy Spirit helps to mortify [put to death] the sinful lusts and deeds of the flesh. We are transformed beyond what and who we were.

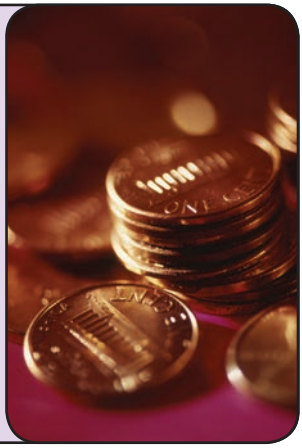
To be nourished in the words of faith is a spiritual discipline. Only through God's guidance and our diligence can it ever become a reality in keeping our lives focused and balanced. ✝

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Kenney's Pennies

"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 16:15-16 NKJV). Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word ***"Messiah,"*** which means "anointed one." Christ is not His last name but who He is. We need to make the great confession every day!

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A Proven Strategy for Memorizing Scripture

Wes McAdams

I recently heard a podcast interview of Andy Davis, who has memorized 43 books of the Bible. Can you imagine, 43 books of the Bible? His strategy for memorizing Scripture really isn't complicated at all. It is something any of us could do. Yes, even you. In this brief article, I will share with you Davis' proven strategy for memorizing Scripture.

Davis recommends memorizing more than random verses of the Bible. He recommends memorizing whole books of the Bible. That way, the entire context and flow of the book is written on your heart. The book with which he suggests people start is Ephesians (mostly because that was the book with which he started).

Here is his day-by-day strategy for memorizing a book of the Bible:

Day One



Read Ephesians 1:1 aloud ten times. He recommends saying the chapter and verse number (1:1) before reading the verse each time. Once you've read the verse ten times, then quote it ten times. You can glance back at the Bible as needed.

Day Two

Today you will start with yesterday's verse (Ephesians 1:1). Recite yesterday's verse aloud ten times (glancing at the Bible as needed). Once you've reviewed yesterday's verse, then read today's verse (Ephesians 1:2) aloud ten times and quote it ten times.

Day Three

Recite yesterday's verse (Ephesians 1:2) aloud ten times. Then recite everything you've memorized up to this point (Ephesians 1:1-2). Now you're ready to add another verse (Ephesians 1:3). Read it aloud ten times and recite it ten times.

Pretty Simple!

That's a pretty simple formula, isn't it? Start each day by reciting yesterday's verse 10 times, then recite all of your verses once. Then, add a new verse by reading it ten times and reciting it ten times.

There are only 155 verses in the book of Ephesians. Using this strategy, it should take about 155 days to memorize the book. Just think, in only a few months, you could be able to recite the entire Book of Ephesians from memory. Or, you could even start with something a bit shorter. Here is a list of shorter New Testament books and their verse counts.

Galatians (149)
1 Timothy (113)
James (108)
1 John (105)
1 Peter (105)
Philippians (104)
Colossians (95)
1 Thessalonians (89)
2 Timothy (83)
2 Peter (61)
2 Thessalonians (47)
Titus (46)
Philemon (25)
Jude (25)
3 John (15)
2 John (13)

Personally, I'm determined to do more Scripture memorization. How about you?

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Our Stand-In

David A. Sargent

Bryson Smith recalls reading an article about movie stand-ins. They're the people who replace movie stars in scenes that are dangerous or just uncomfortable. An example is Glenn Duhigg, an ex-lawyer who worked as the stand-in for Tom Cruise in "Mission Impossible 2." Glenn reckoned, "It sounds very glamorous saying you're the stand-in for Tom Cruise, but I don't think many people realize the long hours and constant demands that deflate your ego very quickly. The days are long. Whatever scene Tom was in, I would be the one standing there, being him sometimes for ages as the crew set up the shot—getting the lighting just right and the props just so. I'd be standing there for hours out in the weather, getting drenched in the rain or sun stroke out in the heat. And then Tom would just walk on the set from his air-conditioned Caravan or out of his beautiful sports car once the scene was ready." As one of the other stand-ins said, "I realized very quickly the difference between being a star and being a stand-in." *

We Have a Stand-in:

We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Because of our sins, we deserve sin's punishment: ***"the wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6:23).

Salvation

Imagine being convicted of a capital crime in the 1st century in the Roman Empire and being sentenced to death by crucifixion. The criminal would be nailed, through his wrists and his feet, to a wooden cross. The cross would be dropped into a hole so that the victim would literally hang on that cross in utter agony until death, usually by asphyxiation because he would finally be unable to push and pull against the nails in his hands and feet in order to exhale. This is what we deserve because of our sins.

This is exactly what Jesus, the Son of God, did for us. He died, not for His own sins, but for the sins of the world, for your sins and for mine (1 John 2:2). He did this because He loves us and in order to save us, for ***only He***—the sinless Son of God—could pay the price for our redemption (Ephesians 1:7). ***"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit"*** (1 Peter 3:18).

On the cross, Jesus Christ was our stand-in. He endured the pain and the punishment from God, all in our place. He suffered the full wrath of God against sin on our behalf so that we can be saved and receive the gift of eternal life. Then, having died for our sins and being buried, He victoriously arose again on the third day, defeating Satan and death (Hebrews 2:14-18).

God will save and give eternal life to those who place their **faith** and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in **repentance** (Acts 17:30-31), **confess Jesus** before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are **baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).** He will continue to cleanse from sin those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7-9).

Jesus, the sinless Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, was our stand-in. He died in our place so that we might live. ***"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed"*** (1 Peter 2:24).

He did it for ***YOU.*** Won't ***YOU*** accept His offer of salvation and eternal life on His terms?

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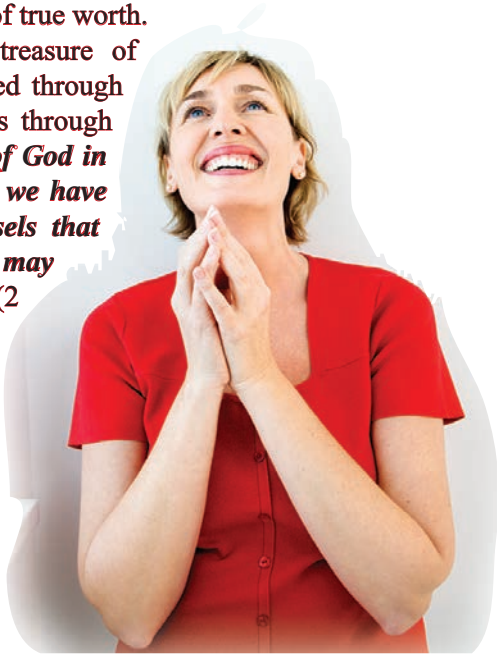
***Source: "Standing In" by Bryson Smith, as published on www.perspective.org.au.**

What Makes a Thing a Treasure?

Charles R. Rose

As a boy, my friends and I sometimes went on a treasure hunt. Seldom did we find anything of monetary value, but we often found items that we felt were real treasures, though they are now long discarded and forgotten. What made those items such treasures for young boys?

For one thing the source or place where the treasure was found. If, for instance, it came from the river or creek where we swam, it had to be of more worth than something found at the house. Secondly, what was its value? What was it worth? Thirdly, was it a rare item like an Indian arrow-head? Finally, was there a need for the object we found? In our imagination, small boys could conjure up all kinds of thoughts along these lines for most objects, but growing into manhood, we discarded most of them as we discovered things of true worth.



Of course, the greatest treasure of all time is the salvation offered through the Son of God, which comes through the ***"knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us"*** (2 Corinthians 4:9b).

Of the four things mentioned above that make an object a treasure, let us consider:

THE SOURCE OF THE TREASURE: Jesus is the source! Having left Heaven ***"by the grace of God to taste***

death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9), He ***"made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men"*** (Philippians 2:7). Our treasure was accomplished when He ***"Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree"*** (1 Peter 2:24a). Having ascended back to the Father, He gave His wonderful treasure in the form of the Gospel message, which today is ***"the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"*** (Romans 1:16). It is delivered by ***"earthen vessels"*** as they preach His Word.

THE VALUE OF THE TREASURE: The redemption offered through this **"treasure in earthen vessels"** is the most valuable product ever purchased by any individual. ***"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your aimless conduct received from your fathers, but by the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot"*** (1 Peter 1:18-19).

THE RARITY OF THE TREASURE: It is the rarest, being truly a "One of a kind" treasure. So rare is this ***"treasure in earthen vessels"*** that ***"there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel,"*** robbing you of its glory (Galatians 1:7). Yet, its rarity and value are such that even angels from Heaven are prohibited from changing one iota of it, and any who do so must face the wrath of God and be eternally cursed (Galatians 1:8-9).

THE NEED FOR THE TREASURE: Since ***"all have sinned"*** (Romans 3:23a) and ***"the wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6:23a), it stands that this ***"treasure in earthen vessels,"*** which contains the power of Heaven to save sinners, is the most needed message any human could hear. It is through hearing this message that faith is produced (Romans 10:17). Thus without the message, it becomes impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith, then, moves one to obey through repentance (Acts 17:30), confession (Romans 10:9-10) and baptism (Romans 6:3-6).

HAVE YOU FOUND THIS TREASURE? ✝

Charles R. Rose works with the church of Christ in Lincoln, Missouri, USA.

Restoration

Brian R. Kenyon

What do we think when we hear the word "restoration"? Old furniture? Antique cars? Simply put, restoration is bringing something back to its original condition.

Spiritually, whenever there is a departure from God's will, there stands a need for restoration. Sometimes, even people need restoration. Humanity was created to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13; 1 Corinthians 10:31), but ***"all have sinned"*** and have fallen short of that glory (Romans 3:23).

From the first sin (Genesis 3:6), accountable human beings have needed restoration. The fulfillment of this need began very shortly after the first sin. It was in the promised "seed of woman" (Genesis 3:15). The remainder of the Old Testament shows the coming answer to real restoration.

The New Testament reveals the reality of that answer. Thanks be to God who provided His image-bearer, mankind (Genesis 1:26-27), with a way to be restored (John 3:16). Jesus Christ is the one who ***"washed us from our sins in His own blood"*** (Revelation 1:5). Thus, Jesus Christ is ***"the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"*** (Hebrews 5:9).

For restoration to be a reality, the Word of God must take precedence (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Restoration can only occur when the Bible is learned, respected and applied. When the right attitude is present along with a proper understanding of God's Word, restoration will take place (Acts 8:30-31; 10:33).

May we all ***"hunger and thirst after righteousness"*** (Matthew 5:6), taking advantage of the opportunities we have to hear God's Word. Let us examine ourselves, for we might find that we stand in need of restoration.

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



1. What is the greatest spiritual gift? (vs. 1-3)
2. Without love, how much are other spiritual gifts worth? (vs. 1-2)
3. Without love, how much is extravagant charity worth? (v. 3)
4. True love is not interested in parading one's accomplishments before other people. (v. 4) True False
5. True love is suspicious of the motives of other people? (v. 5) True False
6. Love does not rejoice in _____, but rejoices in the _____? (v. 6).
7. Love _____ all things, _____ all things, _____ all things, _____ all things. (v. 7)
8. How long will love last? (v. 8)
9. What will happen to prophecies, tongues and knowledge? (vs. 8-9)
10. When will the above happen? (v. 10)
11. What do we do to childish things when we become adults? (v. 11)
12. How did Paul say we see now? (v. 12)
13. How much did Paul say he knew now? (v. 12)
14. Of faith, hope and love, which is the greatest? (v. 13)

(See the back cover for answers.)

Verse Search

1 Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. **2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; **5** does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; **6** does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; **7** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **10** But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

NOTES: This section is perhaps the greatest description of love that has ever been written. In our modern world, we talk a lot about love, but it seems that most do not understand what true love really is. Paul uses the Greek word, *agape,* which describes a love which deliberately chooses to love another. This is not an emotional love; rather, it is a love of choice. It is a giving love that expects nothing in return. This love is the greatest of all spiritual characteristics, even more important than faith and hope, because it will last forever, in contrast to the other two.

Paul clearly states that when "that which is perfect has come," then prophecies, tongues and supernatural knowledge will cease. The word translated "perfect" means end or completion. Some scholars insist that this is a reference to the second coming of Christ; thus, supernatural gifts will last until the end of the world. However, the word for "that" is in the neuter gender, which means it refers to a thing. Jesus is never referred to as a thing. Jesus is always referred to in the masculine gender; thus, this cannot refer to Jesus. This is a reference to the completed Word of God; thus, once the Word was completely revealed, miracles would cease, which corresponds exactly with church history.

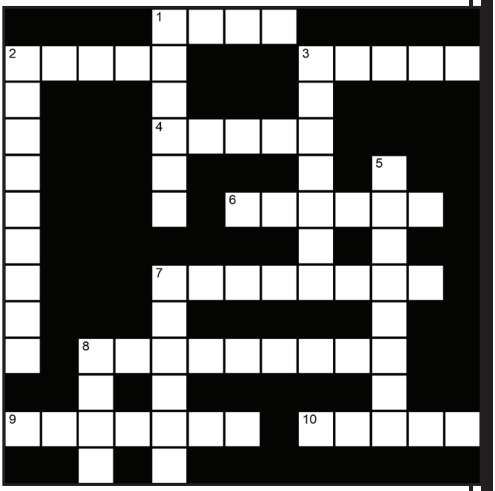


Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Men's Bible Names Beginning with "C"

Across



1. Son of Ham and grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:60).
2. Husband of Joanna (Luke 8:3).
3. Spy of land of Canaan that came back with a good report (Numbers 13:30).
4. Father of Zephaniah (Zephaniah 1:1).
6. Son of Enosh and grandson of Seth (Genesis 5:8-9).
7. A Levite who was treasurer of the temple funds (2 Chronicles 31:12-13).
8. Leader of the Levites and instructor in music (1 Chronicles 15:22).
9. David's 2nd son by Abigail (2 Samuel 3:3).
10. Ancestor of Jesus through Joseph (Luke 3:23-28).

Down

1. Son of Zerha and grandson of Judah (2 Chronicles 2:4-6).
2. First Gentile Christian (Acts 10:24-48).
3. Son of Naomi and brother of Mahlon (Ruth 1:2).
5. Jesus was sent bound to this high priest (John 18:24).
7. Abraham's nephew and Nahor's son (Genesis 22:22-23).
8. The first murderer (Genesis 4:8).

Christ's Blueprint for the Church

"Preach the Gospel"

Acts 2:22-24

Paul Holland

There is nothing we see today that was not in the culture of Rome in the first century. In fact, there are far more Christians and others who claim to follow Jesus Christ today, in America and around the world, than there were in the years A.D. 59, 69 and 79. Christianity was a small movement of people dedicated in their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ.

To say that the Greco-Roman world was polytheistic is an understatement. One historian said there were 30,000 distinct gods! There were only two cities in the ancient Roman Empire that were very large: Rome and Alexandria, Egypt. Many, many cities had less than 50,000. Only about 30 cities in that part of the world at that time had a population larger



than 30,000. Yet, in most cities, there were temples for 15-20 major gods, like Zeus, Athena, Apollos and a host of temples and shrines to other gods.

However, from the time Christianity was established in about A.D. 30 until about A.D. 330, our faith went from a small minority movement to converting millions of people and making Christianity the dominant religion in Rome within 300 years. How? Well, it wasn't because early Christians added instrumental music in worship. They didn't have it. It wasn't because they had praise teams in worship. They didn't have them. It wasn't because they accepted homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle. They didn't. It wasn't because they allowed women to preach, teach and pray in public worship when Christian men were assembled. They didn't. The religions of Rome taught and accepted all these things and more. Much more. Nevertheless, Christianity dominated the Roman Empire because Christians followed the pattern of the Gospel message as the apostles taught it in the book of Acts.

Jesus was a Teacher. He lived His life teaching. He taught publicly, and He taught privately. He taught men, and He taught women. He taught the poor, and He taught the wealthy. He taught the religious, and He taught the irreligious. Why? ***Because man cannot be saved in ignorance.***

Prior to Jesus ascending into Heaven, He told His disciples that they should wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, when they would receive the Holy Spirit. At that point, He said that they would be witnesses for Him to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). We want to consider how the church of Christ toppled the Roman Empire through preaching the Gospel.

PREACHING NEEDS TO BE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT:

When the church of Christ began in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit guided Peter and the rest of the apostles to preach and to teach the Gospel (2:14). The first thing Peter did was to quote from the Old Testament, from Joel 2:28-32, Psalm 16, 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 110. There are some 36 explicit citations from the Old Testament in the Book of Acts. That's more than one per chapter. Clearly, the Old Testament was an important source of authority and teaching for the apostle, and they believed that their audience needed to know that part of God's Word.

The church of Christ, as it follows the pattern for the church in the

Book of Acts, will study and teach the Old Testament, which is made up of 39 books. We need to know those books. We need to study them carefully. We cannot understand the New Testament as thoroughly as we need to or as we should if we do not study and understand the Old Testament.

PREACHING NEEDS TO BE ABOUT THE LIFE OF JESUS:

Looking back at Acts 2 and Peter's sermon, we see that he taught about the life of Jesus (2:22). Peter understood that it was through Jesus' miracles that He proved Himself to be the Son of God, and that through our knowledge of those miracles we have reason to believe what Jesus taught about Himself (John 20:30-31).

When Peter preached to the first Gentile audience, he also told them about the good works and miracles that Jesus did (10:38). So integral is "Jesus" to the preaching of the church that when Philip went down to Samaria, Luke wrote that he was ***"proclaiming Christ to them"*** (Acts 8:5). When Paul preached to the philosophers in Athens in Acts 17, he did not quote the Old Testament, but he did talk about Jesus (17:31) and the evidence of His resurrection.

CHRISTIANITY WILL STAND, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN THE WORLD

When Rome fell, Christianity was left standing. I do not know what may happen to America in the future, but I'm confident Christianity will still stand and must stand to point the way back to the Light.

Jesus tells us that He came to give us ***"life abundantly"*** (John 10:10). That abundant life is a life that is characterized, among many things, by courage.

Be faithful and be courageous (Revelation 21:8). It is easy to tell people that God loves them. It is easy to tell people that Jesus died for them. Nobody finds those messages offensive. Not even Muslims would actually find those statements offensive. It does not take courage to talk to people about love, but it does take courage to talk to people about sin. When you define sin, the way the Bible defines sin, it is exclusive. It means some behavior is wrong and must be stopped. It means some beliefs are wrong and must be stopped.

We all have hopes that are crushed. We all have placed trust in someone that has been broken. We all have disappointments that could have made our hearts bitter. If cowardice motivates our hearts, we will run when things get tough. We will cave. We will give in. Some of us sanitize the Gospel because its message has offended erring people and—like the Pharisees—we love the praise of men more than the praise of God. However, if courage motivates our hearts, we will keep on keeping on, teaching the truth in love.

There is an old German proverb: "Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is." My dad used to tell me, "Son, why be afraid of the boogeyman behind the bush? You don't even know if there ***is*** a boogeyman behind the bush!"

GOD WANTS US TO BE COURAGEOUS

Take a moment to read Deuteronomy 31:6. The phrase, ***"Be strong and courageous,"*** is found ten times in the Old Testament. The phrase, ***"do not be afraid,"*** is found 30 times in the Old Testament. Why was Moses encouraging the Israelites to be strong and courageous? Because God was with them. He journeyed with them. He would not fail them or forsake them.

Read Jesus' words about peace in John 14:27. The New Testament uses the word ***"peace"*** 97 times; John used ***"peace"*** 10 times. He used the word ***"fear"*** 20 times; it is used 101 times in the whole New Testament. So, God recognizes that we will feel fear, but He always assures us that if we walk with Him and we stay dedicated to His truth, we will have peace of mind. We either trust God and stay with His truth, or we do not trust Him, and we become fearful.

Let us courageously share God's message with others and live His message in our lives.

I love jokes. I love anecdotes. I love history. I love warm-fuzzy stories. Many sermons contain more of these elements than Scripture, but you can't build your life on those. In 1 Corinthians 3:11, Paul told the Christians in Corinth, ***"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*** The only foundation that is sure and stable is Jesus Christ. That's why we have to study and preach and teach the life of Jesus.

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

Share the Blessing

Derek Broome

Being a part of the church is an amazing blessing that we as Christians get to experience every day. First, we know that we have been saved and added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). There are so many people in the world who are lost in sin as we once were. It is such a blessing to know that our sins have been washed away (1 Corinthians 6:11) and that we are in a right relationship with God now. As saved Christians, we worship, work, fellowship and grow closer to one another and to God. It is amazing to be part of the family of God (Ephesians 3:15) where we can develop and work as Christians together. Knowing that you always have a church family to which you can turn is such an incredible blessing in the life of a Christian. For some people, the church is the only family they have. We always need to remember that we are so very blessed to be a part of the body of Christ.

The church is such a blessing to our lives when we let it be, but what are we doing with that blessing? Are we keeping that blessing to ourselves, or are we sharing that blessing with the world (Mark 16:15-16)? If we really want those who are lost in sin to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), we have to share the good news of Christ and the blessing of His church with the entire world. I hope that our lives are filled with the responsibility and the desire to share the Good News of Christ. The greatest thing we can do for another person is to share with him or her the message of the cross and the love that the Savior has for us all.

We are so blessed to be part of the body of Christ. Let us decide this day and every day to share that blessing with others.

Derek Broome is a minister for the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.

Being a part of the church is an amazing blessing that we as Christians get to experience every day.

A Growing Church

Steve Higginbotham

Nearly twenty years ago, I read the following two paragraphs. I don't know who wrote them, but I saved the comments, and I would like to share some observations after you read them.

> In 1933, Cled E. Wallace wrote an article in the *Gospel Advocate* about a church in Smackover, Arkansas. It seemed that they struck oil on the church's property and had more money than they knew how to handle. What to do with the money became a live issue. It was finally decided to declare a dividend, cut the huge melon and give each member a large and equal slice.
>
> So that's just what they did. The larger families received the larger checks. However, a problem arose, and it was over a large number of people trying to join the church. An official ruling was that no more members would be accepted! (Can you imagine that?) Very seldom will one find a church that does not want to grow.

Here's what I would like for you to consider after reading the above. If one wants "numbers," there is a sure-fire way to increase that—just offer the public what they want. Some of the fastest growing churches today offer all kinds of things that have nothing whatsoever to do with the Gospel of Jesus. **What's the point in having big churches if the members are unconverted?**

While this is not intended to throw a "wet blanket" on the desire for growth, it is to serve as a reminder of the kind of growth God wants. While we want to see large numbers, it is far more important to see living demonstrations of the Lordship of Jesus among church members.

I cannot help but be reminded of what the Lord told the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel must have been some preacher, for the whole town was talking about him. He thrilled and captivated his listeners, but notice what the Lord said about their "growth."

The Church

As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, "Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord." So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. (Ezekiel 33:30-32)

The Lord is looking for something more than just numbers. He's looking for commitment. Simply preaching the Gospel of Christ has a way of converting the honest seeker of truth as well as eliminating the hard-hearted, unconverted. Preaching and practicing pure Christianity will bring the kind of growth for which the Lord is looking. **Let's make sure we're following Jesus for all the right reasons.**

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



Robison's Rubies

Speaking to people in the first century, Jesus said, "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" (Mark 9:1). After Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul claimed some people had been "conveyed…into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). That's right, the kingdom was in existence in the first century and had people in it. Further, Jesus said His kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36) but "within you" (Luke 17:21). In Matthew 16:18-19, He used the terms church and kingdom interchangeably. The church is not an afterthought; it is the spiritual kingdom of Christ. He has been reigning as its king for almost 2,000 years now!

Paradoxes of Christianity:

Losing Through Saving/ Finding Through Losing

Part 1

Shane Fisher

A paradox is defined as "a statement that seems self-contradictory, yet in fact expresses a possible truth" (www.dictionary.com). The Bible is full of paradoxes. In this study, we will see that it teaches that a person has a choice of either saving himself for his own selfish purposes or goals—and thus losing in the end—or making the choice of finding by losing himself for Jesus' sake.

Consider this question: When you had the desire to save some money as a child, did you put it in a piggy bank, glass jar or another container? You knew that if you placed your money there, it would not get lost.

Think about another question with me: "When you realize you have lost something, you will look for it, correct?" Consider the parable Jesus gave about the woman who lost one of her ten silver coins. She realized she had lost one of them, and she made such a great effort to find it. Luke 15:8-9 states, ***"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'"***

Think about a third question with me: "Normally, when you lose something (and you are not looking for it), will you find it?" No. A couple of weeks ago, I lost my cell phone. I had left it in the pew at a church building on Sunday. I was not missing it, though, because the place where I was staying did not have any cell phone service. A member of the church called the landline where I was staying and said that I had left my cell phone at the church building. I definitely had not been looking for my cell phone because I did not realize I had lost it!

Doctrine To Live By

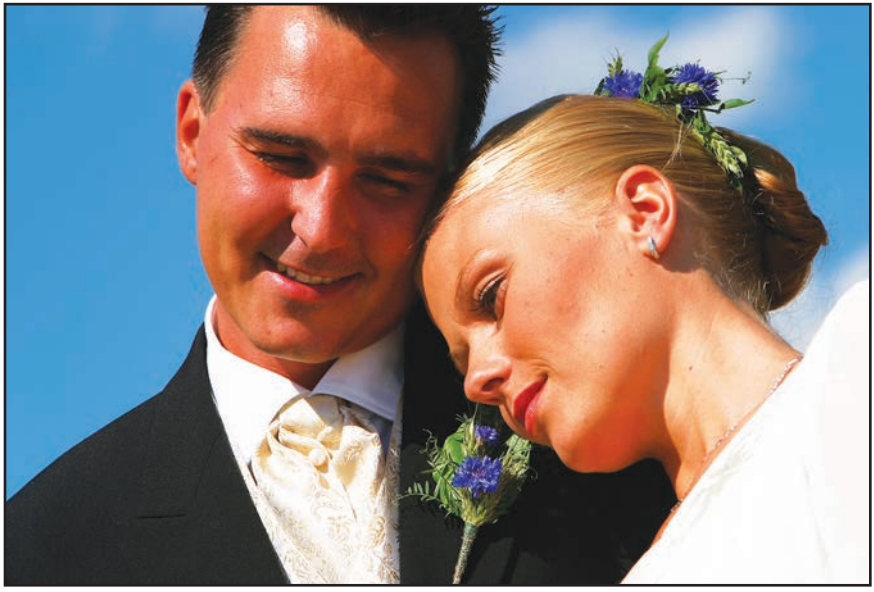
Notice carefully the paradoxes of Jesus in Matthew 16:24-25: ***"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"*** Jesus turned some things upside down on their head! He said that if your goal is to save your life, you will lose it, but if you are willing to lose your life for His sake, you will find it.

In this article, and the one to be used in the next volume of ***The Voice of Truth International,*** we will consider three points as taught by Jesus. The first concerns the questions of marriage and divorce.

First Point: You are losing through saving when you give yourself over to the world's view of marriage and sexuality.

A. The world's view is that marriage was a convention created by mankind at some point on the evolutionary timescale, some two million years ago.

B. It is a cheap commodity that can be handled haphazardly, tossed and thrown about like a fragile box (Malachi 2:13-16).



C. There are many "loopholes" in order to maintain unscriptural, adulterous unions in the church. Some of these "loopholes" include: (1) the deserted "believer" of 1 Corinthians 7:15 is free to remarry with God's approval; (2) the "guilty party" of Matthew 19:9 may, with God's approval, form another marriage; (3) the teaching of the Lord in Matthew 19:9 applies only to a Christian married to a Christian; (4) every person may continue in the particular marriage situation in which he happens to be at the time he is immersed (1 Corinthians 7:17-24); (5) the non-Christian is not under or is not amenable to the law of Christ on marriage; (6) repentance means, if one says, "I'm sorry, and I do not intend to do it again," he is free to live in that particular relationship.

D. It was a creation by the imagination of man who had no deeper purpose or meaning behind it.

However, you find through losing when you give yourself over to God's view of marriage and sexuality. (1) God's view is that marriage is a **covenant** instituted by Him from the beginning of creation only a few thousands years ago (Matthew 19:4-6). (2) Marriage is to be a life-long **commitment** handled with great care and concern. (3) Marriage is to be in **compliance with God's laws** on marriage, divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19:1-12). Jesus stated that there is only one reason a person can divorce and remarry with God's approval, and that is if the other mate was involved in the sin of fornication. (4) Marriage is a creation by God of a "mystery" to reveal Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

A husband is to be willing to lose himself for Jesus' sake and sacrifice his life for his wife. He must show love to her, and she also must be willing to lose herself for Jesus' sake by submitting to him and showing him respect as the head of the household.

Shane Fisher works with the World Evangelism team in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Marriage is to be a life-long commitment handled with great care and concern.

A Minute In His Word

Ben McRee

The avid Bible student realizes that in his reading from time to time, word studies must be made in light of possible confusion or misunderstanding. It should never be the intent of one studying God's Word to make the word fit one's personal interpretation or liking, for we know that Scripture did not come about by personal interpretation in the first place (2 Peter 1:20-21). Therefore, we must read Scripture as it reads, understanding, though, that English translations through the years may try to change words or paraphrase. The Old Testament, written in the Hebrew language, and the New Testament, written in the Greek language, warrant a proper investigation of the correct original word and meaning as these languages are not common in today's time. This is better known as etymology, which is a study of words, their origins and their meanings. I am not a scholar, and I must be very clear on that point. However, one can confidently search out words in Scripture and, indeed, come to know their correct meaning. It is my intent to share one of these studies with you.

We will look at one verse. Acts 2:38 says in the NKJV, ***"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"*** Our word study is on the word, "for." The Greek word is "eis," pronounced like our English word, "ice." The word is a primary preposition. Being a preposition, it is a word that shows the relationship between one thing and another. Therefore, repentance and baptism are linked to the remission of sins.

The word "eis" occurs over 1,775 times in the Greek concordance of the KJV. Yet, let us compare one passage. In Matthew 2:14, Joseph taking Mary and Jesus and, ***"departs FOR Egypt."*** Again, "for" is the Greek word "eis." The KJV reads "into Egypt." This means "toward, to, into."

Here is the confusion. Men have said that the word "for" in Acts 2:38 means "because of," implying one is baptized "because of" remission of sins, meaning he had forgiveness ***before*** baptism. Now, let us apply the

same logic to Matthew 2:14. If Joseph, Mary and Jesus were already in Egypt, they would not have needed to depart! Correct?

Friends, the Greek word "eis," is the same in both passages. Why the difference? Men through time have sought to apply their own interpretations, desires and doctrines to the word. From *Strong's Concordance*, one can see that the word "eis" means "unto, toward." Therefore, let there be no twisting of words. Acts 2:38 clearly states, ***"repent and let every one of you be baptized 'toward' remission of sins…"*** Simply put, Joseph, Mary and Jesus could not already be in Egypt because **they had to depart beforehand.** Likewise, **a soul can't find remission of sins without repenting and being baptized beforehand.** The simplicity of Scripture shows very clearly that baptism **IS** essential for the forgiveness of sins. Honestly, if one hasn't been baptized *toward* forgiveness of sins, has he or she obtained that forgiveness?

Again, seeing the same word "eis" in the comparison passage, if Jesus and His parents had not departed, can we say they were already in Egypt—that they had already arrived before departing? Of course not. Likewise, can we say we have received forgiveness of sins before doing what the inspired apostle Peter told the people to do to have forgiveness of sins? Of course not. This is why 1 Peter 3:21 says, ***"There is also an anti-type which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."***

Have you been baptized to gain (into, toward) forgiveness of your sins according to Scripture? Can you in good conscience state so?

Ben McRee works with the church of Christ in Clinton, Mississippi, USA.

Kenney's Pennies



"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NKJV.) This was written by a person who was "in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often." If the apostle Paul could do this, then what or who inhibits us?

"Why Can't Women Serve in Church?"

Jack Wilkie

The Sunday morning gathering is typically the overwhelming focus of church life. The bulk of the expected education and transformation falls at the feet of the sermon and the Bible class. Much of our fellowship occurs at the building in between those services, along with the occasional potluck or small group gatherings (depending on the congregation). Because of that, much of our opportunity to ***"encourage one another"*** (Hebrews 3:13) and ***"bear one another's burdens"*** (Galatians 6:2) occurs on Sunday as well.

One could even make the case that the majority of our evangelistic efforts are based in the worship service, as we invite visitors, preach an invitation for them, and hope they enjoyed the worship and fellowship experience enough to come back.

The point: when we think of the functions of the church, what happens at the building gets a lion's share of the emphasis, and what happens on Sunday morning gets the lion's share of that lion's share. In that time, women are limited in their participation. It's no wonder so many claim women aren't allowed to do anything in the church, and—if I'm being honest—I have to agree to an extent.

The answer, however, isn't to remove the boundaries to their participation, as many have proposed in this day of egalitarianism. Instead, we should continue to work to expand "church" beyond the building.

When "church" is 90% or so focused on what happens on Sunday, and women aren't allowed to take leadership there, then it's not unfair to wonder if women are second-class citizens of sorts. If, on the other hand, the Sunday gathering is just one part (an important part, but still one of many parts) of what the church does, we can meaningfully say, "Women are allowed to do nearly everything except to have leadership over men."

Spiritually-minded, older Christian women are commanded to share their wisdom with younger Christian women (Titus 2:4), and the younger women would be wise to seek them out. No, it's not a sermon, or teaching men's and women's Bible classes, but this kind of teaching is still desperately needed.

The Bible shows the power of praying, worshipful women through the examples of Miriam, Hannah and Anna, along with Mary's "Magnificat."* The women who followed and ministered to Jesus throughout the Gospel accounts played a vital role in His ministry, despite the fact that they weren't chosen in the Twelve. God's work can be wonderfully administered by faithful women in a number of ways that don't have to include the Sunday gathering. So, though women might not be able to hold the title of "Deacon," they are certainly needed as servants of the church.

Therefore, **it is vitally important that we create opportunities for the spiritual women of our congregations to be active and involved in the lives of the members.** In the age of Google searches and Facebook groups, it's easy for all of us to look to Internet strangers for advice and spiritual encouragement, and young women are no exception. Yet, what they need more than anything is to have women in their own congregations who care for them and are intentional about being involved in their lives. Scripturally, women can not be elders, but they can still guide and care for souls.

If you're a woman who has served God for a number of years, find a younger woman or two to take under your wing, to pray with them, to study with them and to encourage them. If you're a younger woman, seek out the friendship of an older, godly woman or two in your congregation. It might be awkward for both sides at first, but the relationship will be invaluable as God always works in us as we serve and encourage one another.

I'm certainly not naive enough to think this will solve the debate entirely. However, I do think it would go a long way. We as churches are doing ourselves a disservice if we fail to put the wisdom and talents of our women to work. Faithful, God-fearing, praying women are a powerful asset in God's kingdom. As long as we leave "church" at the building and rarely see each other outside of Sunday, we'll never make full use of their talents.

*Hymn based on Luke 1:46-55.

Jack Wilkie is the Editor of focuspress.org and author of *Failure: What Christian Parents Need to Know About American Education*. He also preaches for the Forney church of Christ in Forney, Texas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses
[Ecclesiastes 12:1, 6-8]

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them;"

Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed,
Or the golden bowl is broken,
Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,
Or the wheel broken at the well.
Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.
"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity."

Do you say, "Vanity of vanities"?

Many different things are important at many different times in our lives. Popularity, education, personal success, treasured possessions, wealth, the feeling of security, acceptance, and approval—all of these can become such focal points that they crowd out everything else. When we feel that they are in our grasp, it can become easy to relax and drift on through what remains of our years.

As we grow older, though, through the wisdom acquired from experiencing and achieving, the truth that Solomon stated in this Scripture may become increasingly obvious to us: most of those from whom we sought acceptance and approval have ceased to be major factors in our lives; the possessions we treasured are either old and worn out, or they long ago lost their importance (after all, we can't take them with us—and we grow more conscious every day of the fact that our time in this world is limited.)

What is important? What rises above the disparaging adjective, "vanity"? The one factor that will never go away is our relationship with God! We must focus on this critical, all-important, life-altering relationship. If this is right, all the "vanities" in this life will fade into oblivion. If we share this focus with our mates, our children, our loved ones and our neighbors, we can rest in the expectation of spending never-ending eternity together with our God! *Hallelujah!!!*

6 TIPS FOR BETTER EVANGELISM

Dale Jenkins

Evangelism. The very word brings guilt into the hearts of some and makes others quake with fear. It need not.

What does it mean to say we are evangelistic? We squint and strain at the word, and I must admit it is a rather big and ominous one. Yet, the reality is, with all our materials and approaches, with the plans and the pleas, ultimately evangelism comes down to one thing: telling another about what God has done in our lives.

Some have tortured 1 Peter 3:15 to the point that we miss what it actually does say. It does not say we must be ready to answer every question (2 Timothy 2:15 comes closer to that). It does not say we must know Christian evidences so that we can construct an argument against the most learned atheistic scholars (though I'm glad many good students can). It does not say we must understand and be able to articulate the intricacies of the text, and it does not say we should be able to narrate the Jule Miller filmstrips without the recording.

What 1 Peter 3:15 does say is that we are always to be ***"prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."*** It is the reason for our hope that we are to express and explain. While I am so very thankful for individuals who through the years have provided us with some excellent teaching aids, eventually a Christian should simply be able to share with another how God's redeeming grace came into his life.

The bottom line of evangelism is your own effort of using your God-given or acquired skills to strive to bring someone to Christ via the Good News (Luke 8:39). We've clouded the biblical concept with things like conducting Cottage Studies, practicing Friendship Evangelism and, more recently, being Missional. None of the concepts are wrong, but they can just make this sound more like a task or some performance-driven initiative rather than, as the saying attributed to D.T. Niles goes, "Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread."

Christianity In Action

Perhaps we'd do well to just tell what the word evangelistic means. The word has had a resurgence of late in the secular world. We hear about product evangelists, evangelism marketing or brand evangelists. Each are consumers who have used a product and loved it or benefited from it enough that they happily tell others about it. That's it, isn't it?

I've known evangelistic people like Keith who asks waiters or waitresses if they know Jesus, Mickey who would invite people to pray with them, Pearl who loved to invite people to church with her, or Doc who invited every patient he had to study the Bible with him. They were all evangelistic, simply telling others about Christ and His church and how much they love it. It is a word from the Greek word *euangelistes* that simply means "seeking to convert others to the Christian faith." It is just a fancy way of saying that we are to tell others what Jesus has done for you, with the desire that they follow Him too.

Remember, it is our mission to plant the seed (Matthew 28:18-20), God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6) and His promise is that His Word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). **To try to excuse ourselves by saying no one is interested or people won't respond says we do not believe in the present day power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16).**

I spent 18 years of my life with the most evangelistic people you could ever imagine. Dad—Jerry Jenkins—studied with and baptized thousands of people with his gentle humility and persistent belief in the power of the Gospel. Here is what I learned about being evangelistic from the most evangelistic man most have ever known.

1. **Keep an active list** of people you would like to have the opportunity to teach. Pray about it every day, and then watch for opportunities and openings to talk to them about the Gospel. Do you have a list?
2. **Do things that help** you develop relationships that can lead to studies. Dad would go to the same restaurant over and over at lunch and use the same waitress so he could set up a study with her. He would have accounts at multiple banks and always go to the same teller in each bank, hoping to set up a Bible study with the banker.
3. **Take someone with you** on a study: Dad believed this did two things. First, it kept him going when he was tired or busy. If he already had someone going with him, he didn't want to let them down. Second, it

helped train the other person in teaching the Gospel to others.

4. When studying with someone, **remember you are studying together**, learning together. Don't act like a know-it-all or talk down to the person.
5. **Remember "big picture," "little picture"!** You are trying to teach the Gospel to someone to get him or her to become a Christian. You are not there to win every little argument or continually correct. Too often,we win the war but lose a soul. It is okay to ask someone if he or she can wait about some questions until later.
6. **Be kind:** Leave open doors. Haughtiness, cockiness, arrogance or an air of superiority will close doors. That should go without saying for God's people. If you are not gracious to others, it is possible you do not know what grace is.

To be clear, the answer to the question this article asks is simple: ***Love people and look for openings to talk to them about the Lord who you also love.*** ✝

Dale Jenkins works with the Spring Meadows Church of Christ in Spring Hill, Tennessee, USA.

It's an Interesting Thought

Betty Burton Choate

If we could see our lives as God sees them, how many of the best roads did we miss or refuse to take because they were not what we expected and we did not recognize them as being given by God?

Yet, desiring to work with us, He patiently opened other paths and helped us to make the best possible use of them…because we are His children and He will use us, in whatever ways we will allow.

At the end of the road, only God can know how much we denied ourselves by our lack of faith, lack of vision or lack of submission.

Only God can know how much we grew beyond our own "born" potential because we put our hand in His and let Him lead, even when we could neither see nor understand.

He Who Lacks These Things

Therman Hodge

"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:8-9 NKJV). We see two different Christians here: one who possesses these Christian qualities and is increasing in them and the other who lacks these Christian qualities. Why do some Christians not increase in these Christian qualities?



They have forgotten that they have been cleansed from their old sins. The main reason that some Christians' spiritual lives fall apart is they

have forgotten that they have been cleansed from their old sins. They have forgotten that:

- God **so** loved them (John 3:16).
- The Gospel is the power to save (Romans 1:16).
- Christ died for their sins according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- The Son of God, who loved them, and gave Himself for them (1 John 1:7).
- By grace, they have been saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8).
- According to His mercy, He saved us (Titus 3:5).

To forget is to die spiritually.

Some Christians are blind and cannot see far. When we do not possess the Christian qualities of 2 Peter 1 in increasing measure, we cannot see far; we are spiritually blind. Yes, we are blind, and cannot see:

- All the spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3)
- A way of escape when temptations come (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Evil people will ruin a good life (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- Pleasures are only for a moment (Hebrews 11:25).
- Heaven truly has mansions (John 14:1-3).

A good example of spiritual blindness is the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-17).

God help us never to forget that we have been cleansed from our old sins. If we are to see beyond this life and its troubles to the mansions of Heaven, we must possess these Christian qualifications. ***"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love"*** (2 Peter 1:5-7).

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

They have forgotten that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

Surviving in the Midst of a Deteriorating Culture

Fenter D. Northern

The popular winds of cultural change that began as a gusty breeze during the last century in America are now reaching hurricane proportions. If your Christian faith is not anchored to the solid rock of New Testament truth, you are in dire jeopardy of being swept into a vortex of chaos where silly people become their own God, scorning all ethics and defining life without regard to any consequences on society. It is a temporal life of love centered on self that feeds on fleshly desires. In such a society, the Bible is mocked, Jesus is a fantasy and believers are hated. They hate anyone and anything they see as opposition in their way to gain power. They evangelize their insanity by manipulating their rhetoric to make wrong into right and bad into good. They intoxicate the lazy minded with the wine of free gifts to gain support at the polls to empower them as gods to dictate their wills upon the masses. They have no scruples about defaming good people and rigging elections to steal votes to gain power.

When such ugliness gains control of the masses, the idolatry of humanism becomes the popular vogue of society. Such has always affected some churches that begin to acquiesce by degrees to the pressure of political correctness to keep weak memberships from exiting the congregation for liberal congregations. Some abandon the doctrine of Christ to pacify the worldly pew. By the end of the first century, five of the seven churches of Asia were severely chastised for departing from the true faith. That damning record being preserved in the New Testament should serve as a warning to all churches of Christ for all time.

When the love for Christ and His whole Gospel of truth give birth to a dedicated desire to be with God rather the popular crowd—then the thrust for life is stronger than the drift toward death, and a congregation will survive. Jesus said a few will always find the way. Let's stay with Him. Many thanks to ***The Voice of Truth International*** for its bright ray of light in the descending shadows of a deteriorating culture.

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Do You Teach with Audiovisuals?

T. Pierce Brown



In 1981, I wrote an article about the power of using audiovisuals. A few moments ago, the thought came to me that we are teaching with audiovisuals whether or not we planned it that way. What we say and what we do are constantly teaching, either for good or for bad. The Lord's Supper and baptism are audiovisual aids that God designed to help us appreciate the supreme sacrifice of Christ and respond properly. It is impossible for a person thoughtfully and regularly to meditate on the loving sacrifice of Christ and remain unmoved.

With that thought in mind, I designed a little box that folds into a "piggy bank" with a message on it to serve as a visual aid to be used in every home and classroom that wants to use it. It is to be placed on the table or where it can be seen every day or week, and each time it is seen, it calls attention to the fact that Christ made a sacrifice for us, and we need to make some sacrifice for Him. The bank reminds children of the love of Christ and permits them respond to it. How you talk about it and use it will also be a vivid audiovisual presentation. Remember, ***"The love of Christ constrains us"*** (2 Corinthians 5:14).

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

[Editor's Note: Even without electricity and corresponding equipment, the sermons presented in our worship assemblies or via mass media of various kinds (e.g., TV, DVD, Internet) are all audiovisual presentations. Each occasion of Jesus' preaching and teaching was accomplished through audiovisuals in His person and through His references to people and things that were nearby. Truly, whether a vocational minister or simply another Christian, we are walking, talking specimens of Christianity. Let's be careful to be good representations thereof. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Instrumental Music

Dalton Key

"In 951, Elfeg, the Bishop of Winchester had built in his cathedral a great organ which had four hundred pipes and twenty-six pairs of bellows, to manage which seventy strong men were necessary." This odd squib is taken from a rather obscure book, dated 1912, entitled, *Critical and Historical Essays*. The book concerns the history of music in general and gives much attention to the developments of music within various religious bodies.

When did the instrument first make its appearance in public, post-New Testament worship? Of course, we use the term "post-New Testament" because of the obvious absence of instruments of music in Christian worship as chronicled by the New Testament. Some scholars have said the instrument was first used in worship in A.D. 510. Others contend that Pope Vitalian introduced it in 660. Still others point to 1250 or 1290. As the quotation above suggests, placed in proper context, the date may have been at or about 951.

Yet, what does it matter when the instrument was first introduced? If it came into use after the days of the New Testament, and thus without sanction, authority or consideration from the inspired penmen, it came too late and with no justification. The early church was taught and encouraged to sing; not a word of Scripture authorizes any other form of music in Christian worship.

I have little interest in what folks were or were not doing, or were or were not using in worship, in the tenth century. However, I do care, and I can be certain, what faithful brethren were doing in the days of the apostles. They were heeding the words of Heaven, words that still today teach, ***"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"*** (Ephesians 5:19). The early disciples did not busy themselves with adding to such inspired teachings. They simply and sincerely sang, unaccompanied by and unhampered by extraneous means of making music.

Dalton Key is the Editor of Old Paths and preaches for the 10th and Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

2 Chronicles 29:25

Hugo McCord

"And he [Hezekiah] ***set the Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets"*** (2 Chronicles 29:25). It is clear that Old Testament worship services included not only instruments of music (Psalm 33:2; 43:4; 71:22), but also burnt-offerings of bulls and rams and he-goats (Leviticus 16:1-19), clouds of ***"sweet incense"*** (Leviticus 16:12-13; Exodus 30:7; Deuteronomy 33:10), dancing (2 Samuel 6:14; Psalm 150:4), handclapping (Psalm 47:1) and shouting (Psalm 47:1). It is clear also that the entire Old Testament worship services have been cancelled, nailed to Jesus' cross (Ephesians 2:15-16; Colossians 2:14-16).

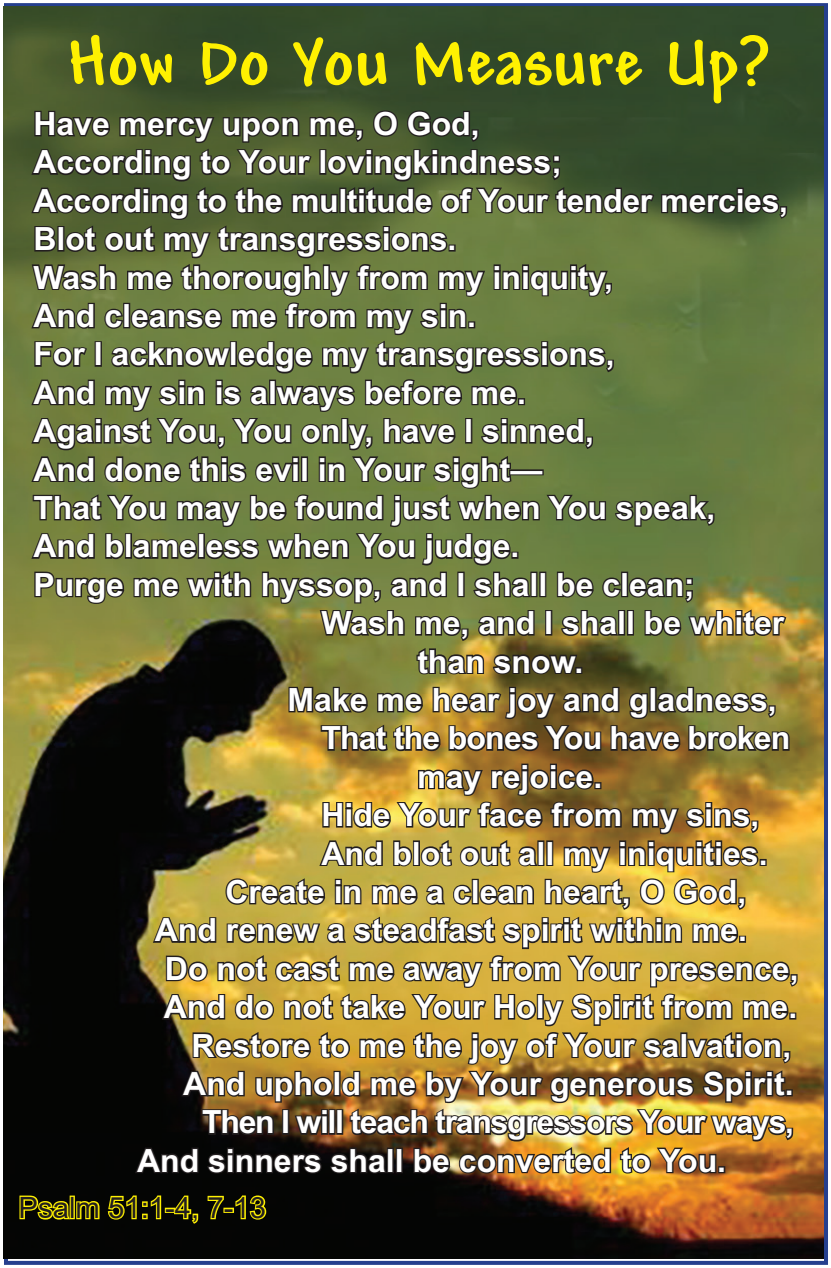
It is clear also that New Testament worship services include singing, the ***"fruit of the lips"*** (Hebrews 13:15; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15), and playing, not on a literal harp (as in Psalm 71:22), but figuratively on the strings of the human heart, ***"making melody with your heart to the Lord"*** (Ephesians 5:19), praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17), on the first day of the week, the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), and the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

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

[*Editor's Note:* As surely as animal sacrifices are inappropriate and not authorized for New Testament worship, likewise instrumental music in worship today is no more appropriate or authorized. Out with the Old—Covenant (e.g., animal sacrifices, instrumental music, incense, tithing, etc.), in with the New—Covenant (e.g., singing, the Lord's Supper, freewill giving, etc.). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

It is clear also that the entire Old Testament worship services have been cancelled, nailed to Jesus' cross.

How Do You Measure Up?



Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Psalm 51:1-4, 7-13



A Texas rancher was visiting a farmer in Israel. The proud Israeli showed him around. “Here is where I grow tomatoes, cucumbers and squash. Over there I built a play set for my kids, next to the doghouse,” the farmer said.

The land was tiny, and the Texan was surprised by its small size. “Is this all your land?” he asked.

“Yes,” the Israeli said proudly. “This is all mine!”

“You mean this is it? This is *all* of it?” the Texan said incredulously.

“Yes, yes, this is really all mine!”

“Well, son,” said the Texan, “back home I’d get in my car before the sun’d come up and I’d drive and drive and drive, and when the sun set, why, I’d only be halfway across my land!”

“Oh, yes,” replied the Israeli farmer wistfully, “I used to have a car like that.”



“Boss, can I have a week off around Christmas?”

“It’s May.”

“Sorry. May I have a week off around Christmas?”



The occasion was a dinner for an American fund-raiser program. One American who attended the dinner was sitting beside a very silent foreigner.

The American concluded that the foreigner must not know any English, so he showed him a fork and said, “This is a forky.” He showed him a spoon and said, “Spoony.” He showed him a plate and said, “Platey.”

The foreigner nodded his head that he understood. After the dinner, the main presentation was about to begin. To the American’s shock it was the foreigner who was to give the speech, and his English was flawless!

After the presentation ended, the foreigner walked down to the American and asked, “Did you likey my speechy?”



Two best friends Emma and Catherine were to meet each other at a coffee shop, and Emma was quite late.

Emma explained the reason of being late. “I bought a Volkswagen Beetle last week, and today it broke in the middle of the road. To my surprise, when I checked, there was no engine under the hood. The engine was lost somewhere along the way.”

Catherine said calmly, “Oh really, don’t worry at all. I also own a Volkswagen Beetle and have a spare engine in the trunk of my car. You can have it.”



During her physical examination, a doctor asked a retired woman about her physical activity level. The woman said she spent three days a week, every week, in the outdoors.

"Well, yesterday afternoon was typical; I took a five hour walk about seven miles through some pretty rough terrain. I waded along the edge of a lake. I pushed my way through two miles of brambles. I got sand in my shoes and in my eyes. I barely avoided stepping on a snake. I climbed several rocky hills. I ran away from an irate mother bear and then ran away from one angry bull elk. The mental stress of it all left me shattered."

Amazed by the story, the doctor said, "You must be an awesome outdoor woman!"

"No," the woman replied, "I'm just a really bad golfer!"



I was just born. My father asks my mother, "Do you have a name in mind?"

My mom replies, "No, uhh…"

My dad interrupts, "Noah! Perfect name!"

That's how I got the name Noah.



I got pulled over by a cop, and he said, "Do you know the speed limit here is 55 miles per hour?"

So I said, "Oh, that's okay, I'm not going that far."



When asked for her occupation, a woman charged with a traffic violation said she was a school teacher.

The judge rose from the bench. "Madam, I have waited years for a school teacher to appear before this court," he smiled with delight."Now sit down at that table and write, 'I will not pass through a red light,' five hundred times!"



The teacher in little Johnny's class approached him and directed him to go to the principal's office. When he got there, the principle said to him, "Little Johnny, I've had complaints about you from all your teachers. What have you been doing?"

Little Johnny replied, "Nothing, Sir!"

The principal replied, "EXACTLY!"



Him: "This article says women use about 30,000 words a day, where-as men only use 15,000 words."

Her: "That's probably because a woman has to say everything twice."

Him: "What?"



"Sir, you cannot fish here!"

"Don't worry, I'm not fishing. I'm just teaching my worm to swim."

The Decision Is Mine Today!

Paul Mowrer

Believe it or not, we are about to finish the second half of the year! So, how are you doing with your "new year" resolutions? How are you doing with the challenge of reading your Bible everyday? I'll be up front with you; I've not done very well with some of my "resolutions." Oh, I have plenty of excuses as to why I have not done so well, but I have no reasons. Yes, there is a difference between excuses and reasons. Bottom line: **I just haven't decided to accomplish those resolutions.**

While attending a conference recently, one of the speakers stamped on my brain the answer to why we don't always succeed in following "resolutions." Here it is: ***"The decision to follow the Lord is mine today!"*** I remember it well because he had us repeat it about a dozen times. Think about it for a moment. There are many excuses as to why



we don't accomplish those things we should, but really there is only one reason, and that one reason is because we just never "decided" to do it. The reason we may fail at diets is because we never "decided" to take the first step in succeeding. The reason we didn't create order out of the chaotic mess in our houses is because we never "decided" to do it. The reason why some have never read the Bible everyday, attended worship faithfully, taken on teaching a Bible class, etc. is because they never "decided" to do those things. We allowed many things (excuses) to stand in our way of "deciding" to fulfill those goals or resolutions.

Notice that the statement involves three very important factors necessary for success. The first is the word **"mine."** No one else can help me or make me do what I don't want to do. You can allow others to try to help, but the only way to be successful is to take the step yourself. In the above mentioned goals or resolutions, we already know what we want to do, but each of us as individuals must take the steps to "decide."

Second is the word **"today."** I believe many of us are into the bad habit of procrastination. So, "today" really is a key word. We may put off for some time what needs to be done today, but at some time, you will no longer have the opportunity to do what needs to be done.

Third is the phrase **"follow the Lord."** The only thing really keeping you from "following the Lord" is you! You may make all sorts of excuses as to why you won't "follow Him," but it really all comes down to the fact that you are unwilling to "decide."

Won't you decide today to follow the Lord?

Paul Mowrer works with the church of Christ in Monticello, Arkansas, USA.

Behold the Man upon the tree
In such shameful agony,
Bleeding there for you and me,
Lifting us to Calvary,
Enduring death to set us free!

~ Louise Buffington

"WHERE THE ROSES NEVER FADE"

Raymond Elliott

The pink roses on our white picket fence this spring have been absolutely beautiful! However, they are now losing their color and are slowly fading into a pale white shade that denotes they are dying. I have walked near them and around them several times, enjoying their radiant color. It seems that this year, perhaps because of my age, I am unusually sorry to watch the blooms fall from the vines.

There is a song in some of the old hymnals that we used to sing years ago, **"Where the Roses Never Fade."** Here is the first stanza: "I am going to a city where the streets with gold are laid, where the tree of life is blooming, and the roses never fade." Now, the chorus: "Here they bloom but for a season, so their beauty is decayed; I am going to a city where the roses never fade."

Of course, we know there will not be literal 'roses' in Heaven. However, we can understand one lesson from this song, and that is, like the roses, we 'bloom' for a season and eventually, we all will 'fade away.' In 1 Peter 1:24-25, we read, ***"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever."***



In Psalm 90, the author wrote of the brevity of man's life on this earth, ***"You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. in the morning they are like grass which grows up; In the morning it flourishes and grows up, in the evening it is cut down and withers"*** (vs. 5-6). In verses 9 and 10, the writer emphasized the certainty of death, ***"For all our days have***

passed away in Your wrath; We finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

The positive side of the lyrics of the song, "Where The Roses Never Fade," says that there is a place where ***"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"*** (Revelation 21:4).

The aged apostle John, in highly symbolic language in the Book of Revelation, described the beauties of ***"the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"*** (2 Peter 1:11), where Jesus has gone to prepare a place for all who have "***washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"*** (John 14:1-3; Revelation 7:14). Though we do not read of 'roses' in this place prepared for those whose names are written in ***"the Lamb's Book of Life"*** (Revelation 21:27), we do read that ***"the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass"*** (21:21) and there is ***"a pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb"*** (Revelation 22:1). John also mentioned the ***"tree of life"*** (22:2) being in ***"the holy city, New Jerusalem"*** (21:2). Our finite minds cannot comprehend eternity or the fact there will no longer be death, which brings so much sorrow to the hearts of mankind when loved ones depart from this life. However, our mortal, natural bodies will be changed into spiritual bodies, suitable for eternity (1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

It is in the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ that our sins are washed away and by which we have been redeemed (Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 1:7). If you are a penitent believer, ***"Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord?"*** (Acts 22:16). It should be the desire of everyone to go to that "Pearly White City" when life has ended for us on this earth. Question: Is your name written in ***"the Book of Life"*** (Revelation 20:15)?

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"My Mind is Made up; Don't Confuse me with the Facts"

Dub Mowery

Surely you have heard the above cliché. If a person actually made that statement in earnest, it would reveal a very prejudiced individual. Those with this type of attitude have closed their minds and hearts to the truth. Jesus spoke of such people in Matthew 13:15 when He said, ***"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."***

Admittedly, it is hard for most of us to change our convictions or to make an "about face" concerning what we have held near and dear to our hearts for a long period of time. There is certainly nothing wrong with that basic commitment within itself. However, a closed mind is not the answer! If everyone had done that in the past, the average person would still think that the earth is flat, even though the Bible revealed the earth was round hundreds of years before men in general had come to realize that fact (Isaiah 40:22).

While teaching a Bible class on Sunday morning or Wednesday night someone may present a different point of view on a passage than mine. When that happens, I listen very attentively to what he has to say. My religious convictions are based upon a careful analysis of what is taught in the Bible on a given topic. When an opposite point of view is presented, I carefully analyze that view and re-examine my position on the same passage. My desire is to understand ***truth,*** not to ***win arguments.*** I'll readily admit my position on a given passage of Scripture is wrong if that can be proved by the Bible. If another's position on the same passage proves to be wrong, then I calmly reason with him by examining other

passages of Scripture pertaining to the same subject.

When you develop religious convictions, make sure those beliefs are based upon a ***"thus saith the Lord."*** We do this by using the inspired Word of God as the standard. With this in mind, the apostle Paul declared, ***"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The Bereans are a classic example of those who examined things taught unto them in the light of the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11). Much of today's religious division would be done away if their example was followed.



Our Savior Jesus Christ taught, ***"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"*** (Matthew 5:6). Do you truly hunger and thirst after righteousness? Can you lay aside preconceived ideas and, with an open mind, search the Scriptures for the true answers? Listen to the assurance our Lord gave to those who will abide in His Word, ***"…If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"*** (John 8:31-32).

Jerry Brewer: txjch@att.net; Message from the "Gospel Preceptor"

What to Give on Father's Day

John Gipson

The story goes that it was the morning after Father's Day, and Editor Norman Cousins, parent of four, was sipping a cup of coffee thoughtfully. "Did they give you anything for Father's Day?" asked a member of the staff. "They did," admitted Cousins. "They gave me all the bills from Mother's Day."

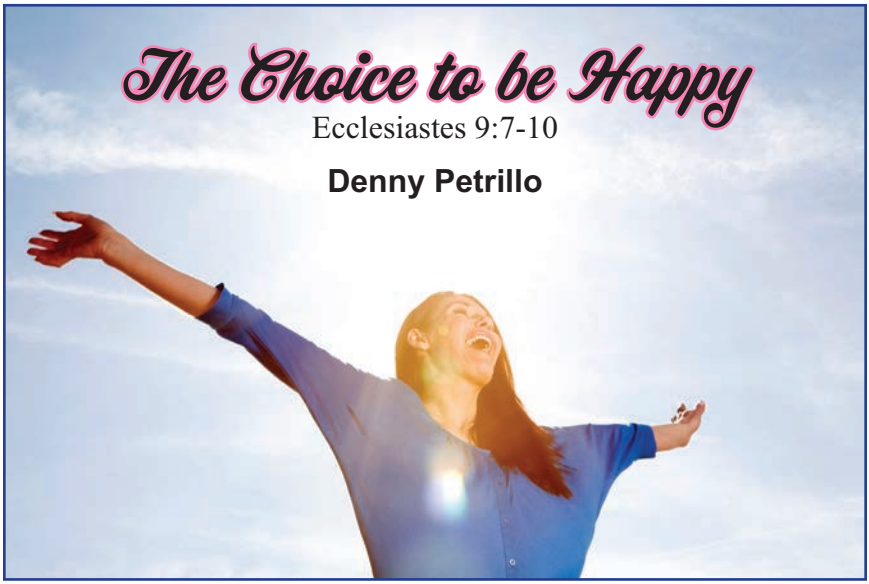
Admittedly, mother is generally easier to buy for than dad. Perhaps mothers tend to be more sentimental than fathers. (Most fathers I know are not sitting around waiting for a card or expecting a gift.) They probably prefer the children to use their money for their own needs.

If, however, you are still in a quandary about what to give your father, I know of no better answer than that given by Bobby Dockery of Fayetteville, Arkansas. He writes:

> Fathers are honored by obedience. Genuine respect is always linked to obedience in the Bible: ***"Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise"*** (Ephesians 6:1-2). Note the linkage between obedience and honor! A son or daughter who defies his or her father to his face…who deliberately disobeys a father's instructions…who refuses to be submissive to a father's wishes…is proclaiming loudly to the world, "I do not respect my father!" All the presents in the world on Father's Day will not make up for a disrespectful attitude, which exhibits itself in disobedience. A present means nothing if there is no respect behind it—and respect obeys!

Conversely, there is no better gift a father can give to his children than the advice King David gave to his son: ***"I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in His ways and keeping His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn"*** (1 Kings 2:2-3).

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Each of us makes a choice, and we make that choice every day! It is a decision to choose happiness or a decision to choose unhappiness. It really does depend upon us (despite our belief that others *make* us happy or unhappy). Solomon suggested five areas where one should find "happiness" and a "cheerful heart."

First, *one should be happy with his food and drink* (v. 7). There are so many in the world that are dying of thirst and starvation. For those of us who have our "daily bread," there should be an attitude of gratitude.

Second, *one should be happy with his clothes* (v. 8a). If one can pick clothes that are comfortable (***"white"***), he should be happy with that. Again, there are many in the world who lack the kind of clothing needed for changes in the weather. If one has adequate clothing, there should be a sense of joy.

Third, *one should be happy if he has medicine* (v. 8b). Solomon mentioned the benefits of ***"oil."*** Frequently oil was used for medicinal purposes, as well as an ointment to aid dry skin. Not all have either the availability of oil or the resources to purchase it.

Fourth, *one should be happy with his mate* (v. 9). When one finds a wife, he has found ***"a good thing"*** (Proverbs 18:22). There are so many who are in unhappy marriages. Why are they unhappy? Usually, one or both have failed to invest in the marriage, trying to make it the best marriage possible. Also, there are those who have failed to develop contentment with one's mate. If the husband is always thinking of other women, or the wife is thinking of other men, a lack of contentment will exist and will grow as a cancer in that marriage.

Fifth, *one should be happy with his job* (v. 10). There are so many who continually gripe and complain about their jobs. Yet, there are others who have the same job and are happy with it. So, what is the difference? The happy worker has a determination to maintain a positive attitude about his job. Frequently, people become discontent and either are miserable in their job or are frequently 'job hopping.' The grass isn't always greener on the other side, as so many foolishly find out, though but too late.

Happiness is in your grasp. Choose to seize it!

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Transformers

Mark Games

One of the most successful movie franchises of late is the Transformer series. Cars turn into giant robots to battle the forces of evil. It all makes for some exciting big screen action.

The Bible, in Romans 12:2, instructs that we "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…" The original word there is a precursor to the English word metamorphosis. One might think of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. The analogy is replete with hope. A person can be transformed from destructive, worldly ways to godly living that brings about an eternal hope.

So You Want Your Children to Prosper

Bob Howton

Righteous people throughout the ages have shared a common wish for their children. They want them to prosper in the Lord and to do well in life. There is no guaranteed recipe for this wish, although there are many things that will contribute to this plan. The best thing one could do to ensure such an outcome for one's children is to start them out on the right foot and prayerfully constrain them to walk in the "light" as long as they live. God's plan is right and true, and it certainly cannot be wrong. However, the outcome depends upon the individual. All of us know families of six or eight children where every single one of them grew up to be righteous individuals. By the same token, we also know of families where only two children are born, and one of them is exemplary while the other is an outright renegade. The difference? Their attitude to God's Word and the instructions from godly parents is what makes the difference.

When King David came to his last days, he communed with his son, Solomon, this way:

> ***I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.*** (1 Kings 2:2-4).

If you want your children to prosper, instruct them in righteousness and set a proper example before them. **That's the best anyone can do!**

The Christian Home

The great apostle Paul gave a heartwarming account of the young Gospel preacher Timothy. ***"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy Grandmother Lois, and thy Mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also"*** (2 Timothy 1:5). If we would couple this sage advice with Paul's timely words to fathers, we'd have a good grasp of the truth that will greatly ensure the righteousness we wish for our children. ***"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"*** (Ephesians 6:4). Many years earlier, the wise man, Solomon, had advised, ***"Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it"*** (Proverbs 22:6). Yet, as you consider these words, do not fall into the old "Calvinistic" doctrine of "once saved, always saved." Solomon who wrote Proverbs 22:6 is the same Solomon of whom 1 Kings 11:1-2 says, "But King Solomon loved many strange women…Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto he children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come into you…"

The Words of the eternal God are not simply drivel to fill an empty page, but rather, they are the inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word by which every accountable soul at the end of life's way will be judged. These instructions do not result from guesses, whims or a majority rule situation, and neither do they come as a smorgasbord collection from which something might work! Every role and every instruction from God work every time, if faithfully followed. So, the absolute best one can possibly do for his children and himself is to follow God's Word faithfully until death. Thereafter, one will receive a crown of life that fades not away (Revelation 2:10)!

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Kenney's Pennies ***"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"*** (1 John 1:7 NKJV). Notice that huge two-letter word" IF." Oh, notice the light, also, which is God's Word—the Bible. Walking in the light is not going your own way.





The Sculptor

Nat Evans

Each preacher, parent and teacher may be compared to a sculptor who is working with a beautiful piece of marble, trying to chip away a little here and there until he at last creates a masterpiece. However, as preachers, parents and teachers, we are seeking to use God's Word and Bible principles to chisel and to shape ever so carefully the heart of a person. We love them so, and we want them to be the best they can be. Of course, we realize that in the case of a child, there is his active response as well. We see both sides of these matters involved in the following passages. ***"Except Jehovah build the house, They labor in vain that build it…Lo children are a heritage of Jehovah; And the fruit of the womb is his reward. Happy is the man that hath a quiver full of them"*** (Psalm 127:1, 3-5). ***"Train up a child in the way that he should go, And he when he is old will not depart from it"*** (Proverbs 22:6). ***"Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor thy Father and thy Mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord"*** (Ephesians 5:1-4).

As parents and teachers of God's Word, we will only have our young people with us for a brief period of time before they will launch out on life's sea by themselves. Then, they will have to make their own decisions based on the education and training they have received during their earlier years. Oh! How soon our sculpturing work as parents and teachers will be over! During these formative years, children desperately need love, guidance and instructions in the ways of righteousness and friendship, but they also need discipline. Somewhere along the way, they must learn the meaning of the word, "No."

The Christian Home

What kind of parents, preacher or teachers would we be if we weren't willing to tell our young people about Satan, sin and suffering (1 Peter 5:8; Romans 3:23; 6:23; Matthew 25:46; Revelation 21:8)? Life is not all positive. We must love them enough to tell and show them by example of the Savior's love, of the Lord's church and of the Christian life.

We must care enough to correct. Even the Lord said, ***"As many as I love, I reprove and chasten be zealous therefore, and repent"*** (Revelation 3:19). The Hebrew writer also emphasized that ***"for whom the Lord loveth he chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives"*** (Hebrews 12:6).

Now our young people need to realize that parents, preachers and teachers who care enough to tell them the truth and to correct them when they are wrong are the ones who truly love them (Galatians 4:16). In this passage Paul said, ***"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"***

Notice the following passages from the Book of Proverbs. ***"Reprove not a scoffer, lest he hate thee. Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: Teach a righteous man, and he increase his learning"*** (Proverbs 9:8-9). ***"He is the way of life that heeds correction: But he that forsakes reproof errs"*** (Proverbs 10:17). ***"The way of the fool is right in his own eyes; But he that is wise hearkens unto counsel"*** (Proverbs 12:15). ***"A scoffer loves not to be reproved; He will not go unto the wise…The heart of him that has understanding seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly… He that refuses correction deprives his own soul; But he that hearkens to reproof gets understanding. The fear of Jehovah is the instruction of wisdom; And before honor goes humility"*** (Proverbs 15:12, 14, 32-33).

What good will it do for people to get mad at the preacher for telling them the truth and exposing sin in their lives? What they really need to do is to be honest with themselves and with their sin problems, and then, decide to do something about that before it is too late. Getting mad at the preacher is a very poor alternative for repentance (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30-31). If a piece of marble stubbornly refused to comply with the sculptor, his hammer and chisel, then there would never be a masterpiece.

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God's Plan for Happiness

Sunny David

During this time of the year, people are frequently greeting each other with a "Happy New Year." What do they mean? Most mean nothing; they just say those words traditionally, just as some say, ***"Praise the Lord"*** (Exodus 20:7). Christ, however, almost two thousand years ago, in His sermon on the mount, in Matthew 5, taught how man can achieve true happiness while living on this earth and in the world to come. The ingredient of genuine and true happiness that Christ revealed, though paradoxically, are so valuable, that if followed, they will bring happiness to any individual not only in this world but also in eternity.

Christ taught, ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** The word ***"blessed"*** means "happy." Being poor in spirit is that quality of recognizing one's spiritual destitution in such a degree as to be enabled to approach God, not as the Pharisee, but as the publican, supplicating the Father for necessary and desirable blessings (Luke 18:9-14). One must have the genuine spirit of poverty and destitution to the extent that even if he possesses his wealth, he possesses it as if he possessed it not. It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength that we may depend only upon the merit of God through Christ for our justification, to enable us to become worthy of the kingdom of Heaven (Romans 3:21-26).

Secondly, Christ taught, ***"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*** The world says, "Blessed are the merry; those who are drinking, dancing, singing and gambling." However, Christ taught that those who mourn are truly happy. The happiness of worldliness in the end brings sorrows. Think of those who seek happiness in liquor, drugs, money and worldly enjoyment. What do they get in the end? Only sorrows and eternal destruction in the world to come (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:7-10; Luke 12:16-21). Yet, godly sorrow that leads one to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10) brings salvation from sin and finally eternal happiness in Heaven (Luke 13:5). Not only do we need to mourn for our own sins, but also, we need to mourn for the whole world, which is lost in the darkness

of sin. If we are sorry for our sins and are concerned for our sinful world, then we are going to do something about it. We would repent, change and would tell others to do the same. Sin offers momentary happiness, but repentance from sin, through godly sorrow, will bring eternal joy.

Thirdly, Christ said, ***"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."*** To be meek is to quietly submit to God, to His will, to follow His direction and to comply with His designs. Meekness was a trait of Jesus (Matthew 11:29). ***"Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"*** (Philippians 2:6-8). Meekness is opposed to arrogance. The meek or the humble, Christ said, shall inherit the earth, because they will enjoy it more fully while in it, being content, satisfied and thankful to God for whatever they receive from Him. Also, because they, like Christ, will continue to influence for good the lives of men and women on earth after their departure from earth (Revelation 14:13), to inherit the "new earth" in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).

Fourthly, **"Blessed are those,"** Christ taught, ***"who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*** The carnal man, who is filled with worldly and fleshly desires, has no taste for things spiritual. A longing for righteousness will bring its possessor to righteousness. Those who do hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled with that for which they have an appetite. God created man with dual personalities. There is the physical man—the outward—and there is the spiritual man—the inward (2 Corinthians 4:16). Just as man needs physical food to live physically, so he needs the spiritual food to be alive spiritually. Again, Christ taught, ***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"*** (Matthew 4:4). The spiritual man needs spiritual food, which is the Word of God that instructs and guides man to live the kind of life for which God created him.

Too, hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently and call for fresh satisfactions. Those who hunger and thirst continually labor for supplies. To hunger and thirst for righteousness means to have the desire to know God's will, which He has revealed in the pages of His Book—

the Bible. Righteousness in the scriptural view, means keeping God's commandments (Luke 1:6). Righteousness is obtained in only one way, by obedience to God's commandments, all of which, as the Psalmist declared, are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). We should, therefore, be not only eager to know God's commandments, but also, we ought to be willing to do what God requires of us. When we have that kind of attitude toward God and His will, then that will bring real happiness and satisfaction to us, as we will know that we are living by the will of God.

Fifthly, revealing the secret of true happiness, Christ said, ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*** Mercy implies compassion that forbears punishment even when justice demands it. Very often, people exhibit the attitude of those sinful men who were getting ready to stone to death the woman who they claimed had been caught in the very act of adultery. Yet, Jesus, who was sinless, on the other hand, said to the woman, ***"Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more"*** (John 8:11). We should be merciful to others if we want God to be merciful to us. ***"For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap,"*** says Galatians 6:7. Even after we have believed in Christ and have obeyed His commandments to be saved, we shall still be saved eternally in Heaven only because of the mercy of God. We must remember, though, that God will be merciful to those who are merciful to others (Matthew 6:14-15).

In the sixth place, Christ taught, ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*** The heart of man is the mind, which is the seat of intelligence, will and thought. Purity of heart or mind is freedom from evil desires and purposes. Whatever man does, he first thinks or plans in his mind (Mark 7:21-23). The wise man of Proverbs, therefore, wrote, ***"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life"*** (Proverbs 4:23). This is to say, that **if our hearts are pure, our lives will be pure**. The happy thing about this is that those who are pure in heart shall see God. They will live with Him, in His fellowship, eternally (Revelation 21:27; 22:5). In heart, we should endeavor to be like little children, as Christ taught at Matthew 18:3. They hold no envy or malice toward others, and neither do they think or plan to do any evil. The pure in heart shall see God by faith, as a source of happiness on earth, and they shall one day see Him face to face in Heaven.

Seventhly, Christ said, ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall***

be called children of God." The peacemakers are called children of God, because they possess the very characteristics or the traits of God. They resemble Him and are most like God in His efforts to reconcile man to Himself through His Son (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The good news of Christ is called the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). If there is anything our world needs the most today, it is peace. Just imagine for a moment, if every person on earth today were a Christian—a Christian in the real sense as the Bible describes—there would certainly be no wars on earth, no envy and no hatred. Then, everyone would think others better than himself as the Bible teaches (Philippians 2:3), and everyone would treat others as he wants to be treated by others, as Christ taught (Matthew 7:12). The followers of Christ can bring peace to their fellowmen who are at strife among themselves. Above all, they can help many to be reconciled to God by proclaiming His Gospel of peace, by urging them to believe in Christ and to obey Him to be at peace with God. Because God is the God of peace, therefore, those who will bring peace to others shall be called God's children.

Lastly and eighthly, Christ said, ***"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** Those whose troubles arise from other causes, such as their own misconduct, are not included in this beatitude of Christ. However, those who try to live righteously by following God's will as is revealed in His Bible and face Satan's wrath because of their righteous living for Him are promised the eternal blessed inheritance in Heaven (1 Peter 4:15-16). Evil forces are at war against the forces of righteousness. Therefore, those who maintain a firm stand for righteousness may expect to be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). Those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake have the wonderful promise of the blessing of the kingdom of Heaven. As a matter of fact, persecution for righteousness drives the persecuted closer to God for refuge, and the closer one gets to God, the richer and fuller are the blessings.

May you indeed have a blessed Happy New Year as you resolve to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ to achieve the true happiness in Him.

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An Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:1-2

Ronald D. Reeves

A chronological review of the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:1-7:29) suggests that this sermon was delivered by Jesus during His great Galilean ministry (4:17-14:12), which elapsed over a period of about one year. This Galilean ministry included three tours of Galilee by Jesus, with the record of the first tour (4:23-9:34) placing an emphasis upon His teaching, preaching and healing, along with a partial record of the public response to His ministerial work. The bulk of the material in this section of Matthew's record provides examples of the work of Jesus during His first tour (5:1-9:34). This section of the record is a topical rather than a strict chronological record of events. At Matthew 14:1, the record appears to revert to a stricter chronological arrangement.

After presenting a summary of the first tour of Galilee by Jesus (4:23-25), the record of the *Sermon on the Mount* was penned (5:1-7:29), with an introduction to the sermon appearing in 5:1-2. These verses include data concerning (1) the occasion and the locale of the sermon, (2) the gathering of the disciples of Jesus unto Him and (3) the beginning of His teaching.

The *Sermon on the Mount* was probably delivered at the height of His Galilean ministry, as indicated by the presence of the great multitudes (4:25; 5:1). The breadth of this sermon is noteworthy; it addressed the current life of the disciples under the Old Law (5:21ff) and proceeded to consider the Final Judgment (7:22-27). Gospel and law are elements of this address. Concerning the Gospel, Jesus discussed the heavenly kingdom throughout the sermon, in regard to its earthly existence (5:3, 10; 6:10, 33) and also in regard to its heavenly existence (5:19, 20; 7:21). Concerning law, Jesus affirmed that He came to fulfill the Law and the prophets (5:17-18), that those who will be great in the kingdom of Heaven are those who both do and teach the commandments (5:19), that the historical teaching concerning

the Law was exclusive of the fuller teaching concerning the Law which He proceeded to present (5:21-48), and that entrance into the eternal heavenly realm requires doing the will of the Father (7:21-27). This sermon, as it outlined the works demanded of the disciples, is the counterpart to the address concerning the last judgment (25:31-46), which sets forth the works that the disciples and the ungodly have done in their respective lives.

Consider the occasion and the locale of the sermon (5:1a). The occasion of the sermon was the presence of the multitudes (note the plurality) and their inherent spiritual needs. Concerning time and place of this presentation, Matthew specified neither. Late tradition identifies the location where this sermon was delivered as the Horns of Hattin, located close to Tiberias and the midwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Luke's account of the *Sermon on the Mount* presents the sequence of events: (1) Jesus went into a mountain to pray (6:12a; Matthew 5:1a). (2) He continued all night in prayer unto God (6:12b). (3) In the morning, Jesus appointed the twelve apostles from among a greater body of disciples (6:13-16). (4) Then, He descended to an elevated plain, healed many and delivered the sermon to the greater body of His disciples and to the multitudes (6:17-20ff; Matthew 5:1).

Note the gathering of the disciples unto Jesus (5:1b). The disciples came to Him when He was set, that is, when He was seated. In accord with the custom of the day, preachers and teachers sat cross-legged, usually in a higher position, as they taught, and the hearers assumed the same physical posture as they listened. The disciples that came to Jesus included the twelve apostles and the larger body of disciples present on that occasion (Luke 6:13-17). This body of disciples was distinct from the masses as they came unto Him.

Ponder the beginning of His teaching (5:2). The statement that Jesus opened His mouth is equivalent to the common Hebrew expression *pithach peh* and marks the impressiveness of the occasion. This verse affirms that Jesus was continually engaged (imperfect tense) in the task of teaching this body of disciples, with the multitudes close by and in the background of the context.

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



Scavenger Hunt

through Job

Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. How many sons and daughters did Job have when he is first introduced?

2. Name the three friends who visited Job to mourn with him.

3. Why did Job's three friends stop speaking?

4. Name the young man who spoke to Job after the three friends ceased speaking.

5. From where did God answer Job?

6. Name two constellations mentioned by God in His questions to Job.

7. Which animal is described as having a tail like a cedar?

8. Which animal is described as having fire shoot out of his mouth?

9. How did Job describe his repentance?

10. When did God restore Job's losses?

The Innkeeper

Dayton Keesee



Oft told is Christ's story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Careful attention and fitting applications have been given to 1. The robbers, who attacked, beat, stripped his clothing and left the man "half dead." They demonstrate ***The Iron Rule*** of "Might makes right." It is the selfish, shameful, stronger-than you, bullying, bad-guy lifestyle; 2. The priest and Levite, each walking past the poor soul, represent ***The Silver Rule*** of "Do unto others as they do unto you." The reasoning was "I did not get him into that mess, nor do I feel obligated to get him out of his pains, perils and problems; 3. The Good Samaritan represents ***The Golden Rule*** of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew7:12). The Samaritan was prepared, cared, reached out, relieved, treated and transported that suffering soul to a peaceful place for further blessings and benefits.

The personality that we have tended to overlook is the innkeeper! If we were to make full application for this "journey through life," the

innkeeper's past is prominent, precious, special and significant! The deeds by the Good Samaritan would be akin to the Teacher or the Preacher who cleans up yesterday's deeds or disaster by applying the Good News, the Gospel, building belief and then baptizing one into Christ to wash away any sins causing any pains or anxiety (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; Galatians 3:26-27). One would then be in the inn (or the church, 1 Corinthians 12:13) for further care and recovery.

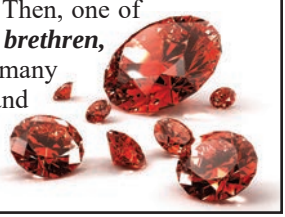
The innkeeper would be like a skilled nurse who supplies daily care and attention for the further recovery to take on the divine nature (1 Peter 1:22-2:2; 2 Peter 1:3-4). Such care may be for the "weak," unstable soul, who needs "support," for the "fainthearted" (little soul who is unable to handle challenging choices), who will need "encouragement" or the "disorderly disciple" (like Israelite rebels who murmured, doubted, repeatedly caused trouble for Moses, ever talking about returning to Egypt-the old ways) who need "admonition," warnings and discipline (1 Thessalonians 5:14-16).

The innkeeper had the challenging duty of physically strengthening an unstable soul. In the church, the challenge is to morally and spiritually strengthen souls who are recovering from multiple wicked ways. Every congregation is an inn with souls struggling to take on the divine nature. They desperately need help for godly growth. Are You a good innkeeper?

Dayton Keesee is an elder in the Lord's church in Choctaw, Oklahoma, USA.

Robison's Rubies

There seems to be something about loving people and wanting what is best for them that turns people off. In fact, Jesus of Nazareth ***"went about doing good and healing"*** (Acts 10:38), and yet His generation called for His violent death. I suppose that is why Jesus told the twelve, ***"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you"*** (John 15:18). Then, one of those twelve wrote to the church, ***"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you"*** (1 John 3:13). To be sure, many people have abused Christianity for selfish ends and have rightly engendered animosity. Nevertheless, the religion of Christ, in its purity, is only for people's good, temporally and eternally.



Barnabas: One Who Encourages

Jerry Kendall



Gentile people and kind words equal encouragement. There are many times when what is needed is someone to encourage. We need to realize that we are either encouraging or discouraging those around us. Who has lifted you up when you were down? Early Christians were extremely aware and sensitive to the needs of their spiritual family (Acts 2:44-47; 1 John 3:17-18). Like Barnabas, we can be people of encouragement?

- **Urge Forward** (Acts 18:27-28). Give support and movement toward a certain point; put in mind by guiding the heart or to hearten (Acts 27:37). It is done through work, word and worship (1 Thessalonians 2:9-12).
- **Express Comfort** (John 11:19-31). Work to become an agent of comfort. It is a calling to one's side (Hebrews 6:18). Who would be

on your short list to contact if you needed your spirit lifted a little or if you needed to adjust your attitude? It points to speaking soothingly (1 Corinthians 14:3). When one makes the decision to come to Christ, he should go on his way encouraged (Acts 8:39).

- **Strengthen the hands** (2 Chronicles 32:6-8). Hezekiah spoke to the hearts of Jerusalem in the face of impending siege. Leaders need encouragement and they need to encourage others. Leaders are encouraged or their hands are held up by their followers (Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:28; 2 Samuel 11:25). Do you encourage your elders (Hebrews 13:17)? Encouragement is meeting the needs of others with God's kind of love.
- **Carefully choose your words** (Proverbs 15:4; John 16:5). Do your words build up or tear down, or do you even care? Life includes times of building and battling (1 Samuel 30:3-25). Everyone needs someone to believe in them, to appreciate their strengths, to help them overcome weaknesses and to accept them when they make mistakes (not compromising biblical teaching, though) (1 Thessalonians 5:12-14).
- **Search out God's Word** (Romans 15:4). In it one will find hope.

The Lord's family needs many more who will take it upon themselves to be a Barnabas, an encourager. We need to encourage our teachers, all workers, parents, young children, teenagers and anyone needing a boost. Those who preach the Word need our encouragement, too. Everyone needs encouragement. Are you a Barnabas: one who encourages?

Jerry R. Kendall is a Gospel preacher residing in Lamar, Missouri, USA.

David's Devotional

Paul in Philippians 3:13 said, ***"…but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,"*** In the text, he was explaining that no amount of past accomplishments or achievements make us worthy of salvation. We must forget about those things and ***"press toward the mark."***

When is the Lord's Supper to Be observed?

Kevin L. Moore

The church assemblies at Corinth had regressed into something they were not supposed to be (1 Corinthians 11:17). Paul wrote, ***"Therefore when you come together in one place*** [epi to auto], ***it is not to eat the Lord's Supper"*** (NKJV) or ***"When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat"*** (ESV). The implication of this reprimand, in light of what the apostle went on to write, is that communion (cf. 10:16) was to be observed when these brethren assembled together, yet their abuses and misbehavior had rendered it unrecognizable. Paul then offered positive instructions for restoring the Lord's Supper to what it was intended to be, namely a sacred memorial to commemorate Christ's death (1 Corinthians 11:23-29) kept on a regular basis ("as often" vs. 25-26). The question is, how often? Since these Christians assembled every first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and they were to partake of the Lord's Supper as often as they gathered together, weekly observance (each Sunday) is implied. Moreover, early Christians besides the Corinthians also practiced the Sunday-observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7).

Is there a particular time of day enjoined? Jesus established the memorial on a Thursday evening (Matthew 26:20) to commemorate His crucifixion, which took place the following day from about 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Mark 15:25; Matthew 27:45). Early Christians observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), the day of Christ's resurrection, which occurred early in the morning (Mark 16:9). The Lord's Supper was designed for observance in God's kingdom (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16)—in the church—on a regular basis to remember Christ's death (1 Corinthians 11:20-26).

While Acts 20:7 affirms that Paul's Sunday sermon lasted until "midnight," there is no indication as to when this assembly began or at what time communion was observed. As long as the Lord's Supper is kept each Sunday (regardless of the time of day), the New Testament pattern is followed.

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

Can God Change His Mind?

David Conley

> *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.* (Jeremiah 18:7-10)

There is no question that God can ***"speak concerning a nation"*** (or concerning a person) ***"to destroy it,"*** yet if the nation (or person) turns from evil, then God said that He would ***"repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."*** **God can change His Mind!**

By the same token, God can ***"speak concerning a nation… to build and to plant it,"*** and yet, if that nation (or person) does not obey God, then God said that He would ***"repent of the good"*** that He had originally said He would do for it! **God can change His Mind!**

What **causes** God to change His mind? We do by whether or not we obey Him! Whether we do good or evil **makes a difference in what God does!** ✝

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

Kenney's Pennies

"Do they not go astray who devise evil? But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good" (Proverbs 14:22 NKJV). What are you devising today? What will be the results of your devising? I've heard it explained that wisdom means knowing to what one's actions may lead so as to choose the best course of action. Choose wisdom!



The New Testament Church—A Chart

Charles Burke

The following is a chart of information concerning the New Testament church as described in the Scriptures. It is an excellent tool for use in teaching the establishment and organization of the Lord's church.

1) The Reign of the New Testament Church

In Prophecy (Isaiah 2:2-3)
In Preparation (Matthew 16:13-18)
Its Establishment (Acts 2:1-47)
Its Existence (Hebrews 12:22-29)
Its Destination (1 Corinthians 15:24-29)

2) The Spiritual Nature of the New Testament Church

A Spiritual House (1 Timothy 3:15)
A Spiritual Temple (Ephesians 2:19-22)
A Spiritual Assembly (Hebrews 12:23)
A Spiritual Body (1 Corinthians 12:13)
A Spiritual Kingdom (John 18:36)

3) The Divine Relationship Between Christ and the New Testament Church

The Builder (Matthew 16:18)
The Purchaser (Ephesians 5:25)
The Head (Ephesians 5:22-32)
The Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11)
The Savior (Ephesians 5:23)

4) The Divine Relationship Between the New Testament Church and Christ

The Bride (Ephesians 5:23-32)
The Body (Colossians 1:24)
The Kingdom (John 18:36)
The Flock (Acts 20:28)
The Candlestick (Revelation 1:12-20)

5) The Divine Names of the New Testament Church

The Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2)
The Church of Christ (Romans 16:16)
The Church of the Firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)
The Church (Ephesians 3:10)
The Kingdom (Matthew 16:19)

6) The Biblical Names of the Members of the New Testament Church

Christians (1 Peter 4:16)
The Children of God (Galatians 3:26)
Brethren (Galatians 6:1)
Saints (Romans 1:7)
Disciples (Acts 11:26)

7) Membership into the New Testament Church

Hear (Romans 10:17)
Faith (Hebrews 11:6)
Repentance (Acts 17:30-31)
Confession (Acts 8:37)
Baptism (Acts 2:38)

8) The True Worship Service of the New Testament Church

Communion in the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7)
Prayer (Acts 2:42)
Singing (Ephesians 5:19)
Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
Preaching (2 Timothy 4:1-4)

9) The True Organization of the New Testament Church

Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7)
Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)
Preachers (2 Timothy 4:1-5)
Teachers (Hebrews 5:12-14)
Members (1 Corinthians 12:23-27)

10) The Purpose of the New Testament Church

To Evangelize (Matthew 28:18-20)
To Restore (Galatians 6:1)
To Worship (Matthew 4:10)
To Serve (Hebrews 12:28-29)
To Minister (Galatians 6:10)

11) The Divine Authority of the New Testament Church

Christ Our Savior (Luke 2:8-13)
Christ Our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5)
Christ Our Lawgiver (Matthew 28:18-20)
Christ Our Ruler (Ephesians 1:22-23)
Christ Our Judge (2 Corinthians 5:10)

12) The Divine Acceptance of the New Testament Church

Glorious (Ephesians 5:25-27)
Spotless (2 Peter 2:1-3)
Holy (Galatians 1:6-9)
Faultless (2 Peter 3:16-17)
Flawless (Jude 1:1)

Conclusion:

Let us pray that, as we consider the above Scriptures relating to the church of our Lord, we will always remember that we (the church, Ephesians 5:23, 30) are ***"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people*** [marginal reading: a purchased people]; ***that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"*** (1 Peter 2:9).

Charles Burke is a minister for the congregation in Bisbee, Arizona, USA.



GOD HATES SIN!

Psalm 7:11

WHO WILL JESUS DESTROY?

1. Fornicators (1 Cor. 6:9)
2. Idolaters (1 Cor. 6:9
3. Adulterers (1 Cor. 6:9)
4. Homosexuals (1 Cor. 6:9)
5. Sodomites (1 Cor. 6:9)
6. Thieves (1 Cor 6:10)
7. Covetous (1 Cor. 6:10)
8. Drunkards (1 Cor. 6:10)
9. Revilers (1 Cor. 6:10)
10. Cowardly (Rev. 21:8)
11. Unbelieving (Rev. 21:8)
12. Murderers (Rev. 21:8)
13. Sexually Immoral (Rev. 21:8)
14. Sorcerers-Druggies (Rev. 21:8)
15. Liars (Rev. 21:8)
16. Lustful (Matt. 5:28)
17. Porn Watchers (Matt. 5:28)
18. Immodest Women (1 Tim.2:9)
19. Hypocrites (Matt. 24:51)
20. Hateful & Selfish (Gal. 5:20)

Mike Huff



People will say, "I love Christ, but I hate the church."

Colossians 1:24
I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

Ephesians 5:23
For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

One cannot love Christ and hate the church. The church is the body of Christ. Christ is head of the church and Christ shed His blood in order to purchase the church (Acts 20:28).

Dave Hart

David's Devotional

Adam and Eve learned this lesson the hard way! "You will be as wise as God" was Satan's promise. When they ate the fruit, they found that they were very unwise instead! When we try to be or do something for which we are not designed, we often hurt ourselves! Let's be aware of just how big (or should I say just how small) we are and trust God to handle the rest!

What About the Effectiveness of Those Books and Magazines?

Betty Burton Choate

Recently I visited a ladies' class. I had hardly taken a seat before one of the women said, "Betty doesn't have a book!"

Now, in a country where "no one reads literature" and in a brotherhood which has grown to believe that line so strongly that it is difficult to raise mission money for printing materials overseas, I was somewhat surprised…and gratified.

Yes, we are people of literature. If we could see the figure on the number of trees fed through our printing presses each year, nothing more would have to be said.

But Christians question the *effectiveness* of literature. Let me share a letter and its background with you.



In India and Asia we publish monthly magazines. Feeling that some materials needed to be provided especially for the female readers, I began submitting articles regularly three or four years ago.

One article was entitled, *"What Is a Wife?"* In response, we received this letter from a brother in Ghana:

Dear Madam-in-Christ,

In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I write to wish you the best. Your article, "What Is A Wife," is what moved me to write this letter to you.

The article is concise and so comprehensive that all I did was to type it out and present it as the only advice I have to my daughter and her husband on their wedding which took place on August 19 this year. The only addition I made was the admonition for them to read the article as often as possible, especially when misunderstandings and conflicts should erupt throughout the journey of their marriage.

Thereafter, I found myself giving out typescripts of "What Is A Wife" to friends and conflicting couples. It is indeed wonderful that visible changes take place in their life after reading your article, and the appreciation is given to me.

I realize that I do not at all deserve the praises and thanks. I feel the honour should go to God Almighty who by his Grace has given you the wisdom to write this wonderful article. May He continually sustain you and your family. I will not forget to mention Evangelist Stephen Ankamah, the local preacher of Jasikan Church of Christ where I worship, through whose kindness I get copies of the magazine.

And now a little bit about my country and myself: Ghana is a small country in West Africa. My town where I am writing from is situated in the mid section of the Volta Region of Ghana, and about 300 kilometers from the Capital, Accra. I am a 53 year-old man with a family of 5. My eldest child, Charity, was recently married. I was baptized into the Lord's church just about 4 months ago by Brother Stephen Ankamah. As a member of the church of Christ I am convinced I have now seen the light at last. I am a child in the Church and now learning very hard.

If it is at all possible that I should know more about you and your family, I shall be most grateful.

Once again, I wish you and your family God's sustained care and blessings.

Gilbert Kwame Sekyi

I hope that, as you read, you put yourself in the place of brother Sekyi. So much is available to us. If we want a paper or a magazine, we have only to subscribe. Reference books to aid in our study are as close as the bookstore or the telephone. *Never* have we been in a position where we could not buy a Bible in our own language or a concordance so that we could study and grow as rapidly as we desired.

But brother Sekyi values whatever literature comes his way, by the grace of God and the mercy of some brother who shares what he has. There is no bookstore in his city in Ghana where he can go to browse and buy what he wants. But he realizes the value of literature enough that he has gone to the trouble to type out the article he considered helpful and to give it to those he felt would benefit.

Dear Brother:

A few months back, as per the request made by me, I had received a set of 20 English and 20 Hindi books from *The Bible Teacher*, New Delhi. These books are really good and I am enjoying constantly by reading these books.

Along with these books, I got a copy of *The Voice of Truth International, India Edition*. Many of the short articles of this magazine touched me very much and God had *enabled me to preach some sermons also from this magazine in our congregation and in our weekly prayer group meetings.* I thank God for His kindness in this direction.

I wish that if I could get this magazine regularly, it would be highly beneficial for my own personal study/meditation and for serving the wonderful things of God to others as well.

Jesus Christ The Eternal Sacrifice,* by Betty Burton Choate, and *Studies on the Books of Romans* by Steve Williams are nice books. These books have helped me much in my spiritual growth and *changed my spiritual perspective.

T.C. Varghese

We also had this letter from a preaching brother in the Philippines:

Dear Brother,

Thank you very much for ***The Voice of Truth International.*** It is a magazine I have yearned to see for years. Like the Reader's Digest it is interesting to read. It covers a lot of topics of general interest in the field of religion. It is a great tool for evangelism, for aside from its beautiful quality it presents the truth in a positive manner.

From the Heart Of

Through brother Reuben Emperado, I have received a total of about three dozens of the magazine. We are giving them out slowly so that the supply will last long. In many cases we only lend to friends and prospects. In this way they will last much longer still.

Brother Emperado also gave me these assorted books: **Gospel Sermonettes, Basic Bible Lessons, Bible Themes, What Is a Christian?, New Testament Worship, You Can Be Just a Christian, and Conversions in Acts.** All of these are good for evangelism.

But I wish to give special acknowledgement of your book, **Sermon Outline Collection, Volume 1.** I got only one copy. I wish I had a little bit more of these materials. It is excellent for members who are being trained as leaders in the church. I would appreciate if you could give us about three copies of each of your two volumes of **Sermon Outline Collections.**

We are grateful to God for your great contribution to world evangelism. It is a labor of love for which we are eternally thankful. May God bless you with continued good health.

Fellow laborer in Christ,

Jack Belo

In reading brother Belo's letter, did you notice that the brethren in Cebu City had shared only about three dozen copies of ***The Voice of Truth International?*** Not very generous, were they? But the problem is that we are doing extremely well to pay for the printing and the shipping of of 3,000 copies of the magazine to the Philippines. Then the brethren send small bundles to the congregations scattered throughout the islands. And actually, three



dozen copies was as generous as their numbers would allow them to be.

So brethren who receive the literature that is precious to them **"give them out slowly so that the supply will last long. In many cases we only *lend* to friends and prospects. In this way they will last much longer still."**

And did you notice his deep appreciation for the sermon outline book? That is because they don't have stores there where a preacher can *buy* such books. If he doesn't have a library of research books, 100 sermon outlines on various topics, with Scripture references searched out and listed, would be a tremendous help in preparing his lessons. How well do you think the average American preacher would do if he had no concordance or reference library?

So much of our growth in the faith is due to the tremendous advantages we have had in literature available to us for so many years. And shame, shame on us for not valuing it and using it more.

We regularly mail packets of books from our office here in Winona, as well as printing magazines and study books in numerous countries overseas. What we do, though—the *best* that we can do—is *embarrassing* compared to the need. What is 2,000 copies of ***The Voice of Truth International*** compared to the 70 million people of the Philippines, and the 6,000 Christians and 281 congregations of the Lord's church? Yes, the Cebu City brethren were being generous; dividing 3,000 copies of the magazine by 281 congregations means only *nine* copies each, to be fair.

Are brethren in other places being starved, in contrast to our wasteful abundance?

Brethren, please help us to do more to provide spiritual nourishment for fellow Christians, as well as evangelistic tools as they try to reach out to their own people. ✝



Note: This is the cover for Volume 100 of *The Voice of Truth International.*

Noting Your Bible



Become a Christian

God has not left us in the dark about how to be saved from our sins. We can know what His Word says about how to become His child and to share that truth with others.

1. Somewhere in the front of your Bible next to the topic, "Become a Christian," write, **"2 Timothy 3:16-17."** Turn to this passage and write next to it, **"God's Word is sufficient (also 2 Peter 1:3-11); see Romans 3:23."**
2. In Romans, write, **"We all are in need of a Savior; see Luke 24:44."**
3. In the context of Luke 24, write, **"Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies; see Hebrews 9:22-28."**
4. Turn to Hebrews, and write, **"Christ is the perfect sacrifice; see Acts 5:30-31."**
5. In Acts, note, **"Jesus is the Savior (also Hebrews 5:9; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 2:2); see Mark 9:7."**
6. In the Mark passage, write, **"Listen/understand/submit to Jesus' authority (also Matthew 28:18-20); see John 20:30-31."**
7. At John 20, note, **"Must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (also John 8:24); see Acts 17:30-31."**
8. Here, write, **"Commanded to repent (also Luke 13:3, 5); see Acts 2:37-41."**
9. In the second chapter of Acts, note, **"Commanded to repent and to be baptized (also Acts 8:35-38); see Matthew 10:32."**
10. In Matthew, write, **"Must be able to confess Jesus in order for Him to do so to the Father; see Romans 10:9-10."**
11. Turn to Romans, note, **"Belief leads to confession; see Romans 6:3-5."**
12. In Chapter 6, write, **"Immersion puts us into Christ; His blood washes our sins away (also Romans 5:9; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21); see Acts 22:16."**
13. In Acts 22, note, **"We call on God to save us when we submit to baptism."** Immersion is the point at which God adds us to Christ's body, the church (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13-14; 2:12; Ephesians 1:7, 22-23). Believing, repenting of sins and confessing our Lord are ongoing in the Christian's life (Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 1:5-10; Revelation 2:10). Submitting to God's Word is our faith in action, leading us to obey, trusting in His grace and remembering our salvation through Christ! **Are you obeying our Lord?**

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

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

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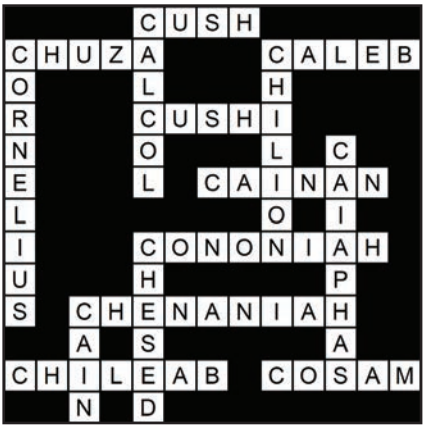
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Verse Search (Page 42)

1. Love
2. Nothing
3. Profits nothing
4. True
5. False
6. Iniquity, truth
7. Bears, believes, hopes, endures
8. Forever. It will never fail.
9. Fail, cease, vanish away
10. When that which is perfect comes.
11. Put away childish things
12. Dimly
13. Only in part
14. Love

Bible Find (page 44)



Scavenger Hunt (page 91)

Answers:

1. seven sons, three daughters (1:2)
2. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (2:11)
3. Job was righteous in his own eyes (32:1)
4. Elihu (32:1-6)
5. out of a whirlwind (38:1)
6. Pleiades, Orion (38:31)
7. behemoth (40:15-17)
8. leviathan (41:1, 19)
9. in dust and ashes (42:6)
10. when Job prayed for his friends (42:10)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

"...And the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God that You tell us IF YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD?'

"Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'" (Matthew 26:63,64).

There are those who say that Jesus never actually claimed to be the Son of God. How inattentively they must read the Scriptures! Even the blind and hardened High Priest had no trouble understanding Jesus' claim to Deity. *Yes! He was the Son of God!*

Throughout the trial, regardless of the physical abuse heaped upon Him, and regardless of the false charges made about Him, the record declares that Jesus said nothing in defense of Himself. Yet, suddenly, with this question, He spoke up, not only answering the High Priest but also volunteering additional information. Why?

Jesus was not concerned about the beatings and the false charges. To come to this end was why He had been born, so there was nothing to say. But when the challenge was hurled, *"Are You the Christ? Are You the Son of God?"* an answer had to be made. It must be established that this was why He was dying — not because He *claimed* to be God's Son, but because He *was* God's Son. Just as no Christian can deny His Lord, even Jesus could not deny Who He was — He was required to confess Himself before men!

But these verses are arresting from another point of view. The priest had asked, "Are You the Son of ***God?"*** and Jesus had affirmed that it was so. But then He said, *"You will see the Son of **Man** sitting at the right hand of the Power..."*

This combination and contrast — ***Son of God, Son of Man*** — were not simply a play on words or poetic phraseology. Jesus was making a profound statement about Himself. He was saying, "Yes, I am Deity. I have come from God. ***I am the Son of God.*** And I will return to sit at the right hand of God."

But in the same breath He was stating His very real relationship with humanity, by referring to Himself as "the Son of ***Man".*** And the amazing thing is that, standing there before them in the flesh of a man, He said, "I am ***Deity",*** but in describing Himself in the future, in the Heavenly scene and seated at the right hand of God, He defined Himself as "the Son of ***Man"!***

What did this tell the High Priest, and what does this tell us, about Jesus' continuing existence? That even in Heaven, seated beside God on His throne, He retains His relationship with human beings! It is as resurrected **MAN** that He intercedes for us, and it will be as transformed, triumphant **MAN** that we will see Him coming in the clouds of Heaven!

*"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM,** for we shall see Him as He is"* **(1 John 3:2).**