

V^{THE} VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



**There are millions of physically blind people
in the world, but through the work
of Christians, these are being given spiritual sight!**

A Moment Of Silence

Ben McRee

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

*A moment of silence revives the thought,
of my wretched soul, the Savior bought.*

*How could the Lord find worth in me,
One who has fallen often and no doubt is guilty?*

*What did He see, that I could not,
Through my sins, blot after blot?*

*A moment of silence, reflection and prayer,
Through reading His Word, He has always been there.
In those moments when I reasoned no one would know,
In those moments I kept secret the sins not to show.*

*All those times I sought error alone,
My Lord still saw, to Him all is known.*

*A moment of silence, I thank my Lord;
Such wonderful sacrifice He paid for the world.*

*He took my weight and bore upon the cross,
The guilt of all souls, so they would not be lost.*

*I thank you Lord for offering to me,
Through Your bloodshed, salvation eternally.*

*A moment of silence reminds me how,
I can repent of my sins, my wrongs now.
I can turn to God, obey Him, and love the Lord,
And I know when I do, He will still love me more.*

*I am not perfect, I still have moments I fall,
But then I remember, in a moment of silence,
He paid it all!*

ETERNAL DEATH

JOURNEY TO ETERNITY

MATTHEW 7:13-14

ETERNAL LIFE

JER 6:15-17

MAN'S WAY
"AN HOPELESS END"

ONE IS DEAD
IN SIN

EPH 2:1-7

SEPARATED
FROM GOD

ISA 59:1-2

IS WITHOUT
ANY HOPE

EPH 2:12

OLD MAN OF
THE WORLD

2CO 4:3,4

CONDEMNED
TO HELL

MAR 9:47-48

PUNISHED
IN DEATH

2TH 1:7-9

THE BROAD WAY

THE NARROW WAY

JNO 14:1-6

GOD'S WAY
"AN ENDLESS HOPE"

MADE ALIVE
IN CHRIST

EPH 2:1,5

RECONCILED
BACK TO GOD

EPH 2:15,16

HOPE OF
HEAVEN

HEB 6:19,20

NEW MAN
IN CHRIST

2CO 5:17

NO CONDEM-
NATION

ROM 8:1,2

BLESSED
IN DEATH

REV 14:13

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR UNITY IN THE CHURCH

JOHN 17:20-21, "NEITHER PRAY I FOR THESE ALONE, BUT FOR THEM ALSO WHICH SHALL BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH THEIR WORD; (21) THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; AS THOU, FATHER, ART IN ME, AND I IN THEE, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME." KJV

ANSWERED IN THE
ONE TRUE CHURCH

BIBLE NAME

ACTS 11:26; 26:28;
1PE. 4:16; ROM. 16:16;
COL. 3:17

UNITY

JOHN 17:20-21

ACT. 4:12
ONE NAME

ONE INSPIRED CREED

1CO. 4:6; 2TI. 3:16-17;
2JO. 9-11; EPH. 4:1-6

AUTHORIZED WORSHIP

JOH. 4:23-24; ACT. 2:42;
COL. 3:16-17; REV.

22:18-19

SCRIPTURAL SALVATION

JOH. 14:6; 6:45, Joh.
8:24; LUK. 13:3-5, Rom.
10:8-9; 1PE. 3:20-21

ONE
IN
CHRIST

1PE. 4:11
ONE CREED

MAT. 15:8-13
ONE WORSHIP

ACT. 16:17
ONE SALVATION

1 CORINTHIANS

1:10; 12:25

UNANSWERED IN
DENOMINATIONS

SECULAR DIVISIVE NAMES

CATHOLIC, METHODIST, LUTHERAN
EPISCOPAL, BAPTIST, MORMON,
J. WITNESS, HOLINESS, ETC.

MANY DIFFERENT CREEDS
CREEDS, MANUALS, DISCIPLINES,
CATECHISMS, DIFFERENT FAITHS,
DENOMINATIONAL AUTHORITIES

WORLDLY WORSHIP

TRADITIONAL (PER DENOMINATION),
CONTEMPORARY, PERSONAL
PREFERENCE OVER GOD'S

SECULAR DIVISIVE NAMES

FAITH ONLY, GRACE ONLY,
SINNER'S PRAYER, SPRINKLING,
POURING, NO BAPTISM

TO BE PUNISHED
DASINGFUL
DIVINGEOLS
1CO. 1:10-13
PRO. 6:16-19
1CO. 3:3-4
1CO. 12:25

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

Brotherly Love

Louis Rushmore



The epistle of 1 Corinthians was addressed *“to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...”* (1 Corinthians 1:2). Christians in first century Corinth were the church of God because they had been sanctified by Jesus Christ when they answered the call of the Gospel to be saints or to be set apart from the ungodly world. To be saints is to be pure and morally blameless. However, the church at

Corinth seems to have forgotten several important essential characteristics of people who have been sanctified, called to be saints and who claim to be the church of God. The Book of 1 Corinthians exists in our New Testament because in so many ways the congregation assembling there had erred from their instruction in the Gospel; each chapter corrects one or more doctrinal errors in the church of God at Corinth. First Corinthians either would not have been penned had the brethren not messed up their Christianity so badly, or the tenor and content would have been entirely different had they not failed to practice the Gospel correctly.

In Chapter 1, the inspired apostle Paul sought to counter the sectarian division among Christians inside the church at Corinth.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is

Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13 NKJV).

Of all the things wrong in Corinth, this was the number one or first problem the Holy Spirit through His scribe went about to correct. So serious was the problem of brethren getting along with brethren that the apostle addressed it again in Chapter 3.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

As Christians, we are no longer mere men and women. We are much more! Of all people, brethren ought to get along with brethren, yet reminders for brethren to love brethren dot the New Covenant. Carefully notice the following samples.

- ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).***
- ***“These things I command you, that you love one another” (John 15:17).***
- ***“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10).***
- ***“...walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...” (Ephesians 5:2).***
- ***“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4:9-11).***



- *“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other”* (2 Thessalonians 1:3).
- *“Let brotherly love continue”* (Hebrews 13:1).
- *“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart”* (1 Peter 1:22).
- *“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king”* (1 Peter 2:17).
- *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing”* (1 Peter 3:8-9).
- *“...above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling”* (1 Peter 4:8-9).
- Amidst the Christian graces, we have *“brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love”* (2 Peter 1:7).
- *“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”* (1 John 3:10-11).
- *“And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment”* (1 John 3:23).
- *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 John 4:7-8).
- *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also”* (1 John 4:20-21).
- *“...now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another”* (2 John 5).


So much emphasis by the Holy Spirit through various penmen to

several Christians scattered across the Mediterranean world demonstrates the widespread problem of Christian brethren properly loving and cooperating with each other. The church today struggles with the same challenge for brethren to love and to cooperate with each other. Clearly, **any church, where brethren do not love each other as they should, is hampered in everything and displeasing to Almighty God. The subsequent wrangling and division resulting from inferior love among brethren is no more acceptable in the 21st century than it was in the 1st century!** Church members in Corinth forgot to love each other as Jesus Christ loved them, even to the point of dying for them.

Somebody needs to be in charge and responsible for the success or the failure of any venture. God decided that the husband and father in the home must be answerable to Him for the success or the failure of the home (Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1). Likewise, He determined that elders are to be answerable to Him for the spiritual well-being of a local church (Hebrews 13:17). Both homes and congregations that lack God's appointed leadership manifest chaos and divisiveness. Dissension in either the home or the church occurs due to the lack of proper God-ordained leadership **and** because of the self-will of family members and church members alike.

One of the biblical qualifications that a man must have to be considered for the eldership is 'not to be self-willed' (Titus 1:7). Christians must ***"contend earnestly for the faith"*** (Jude 3)—not compromising ***"sound doctrine"*** (Titus 2:1), but they must not be contentious—demanding their own way—regarding non-doctrinal matters. One such Bible character who is infamously noteworthy for demanding his own way is Diotrephes (3 John 9-10). The apostle John called this behavior evil (3 John 11).

Brethren, **we need to remember to Whom the church belongs.** It does not belong to any man, but it belongs to Jesus Christ who died to purchase it with His blood (Acts 20:28) and over which He alone is the Head (Colossians 1:18). We are merely stewards of what belongs to God. Therefore, **we should not wrangle over something that does not belong to us.**

Concentrating on brotherly love and remembering to whom the church really belongs will dispel much of the divisiveness in a local congregation. The children of God need to be ***"bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men"*** (Ephesians 6:6-7). 



It Is a Matter of the Heart!

Jerry Bates

Most congregations meet multiple times during a week for Bible Study, worship or other purposes, and most faithful members will try to attend those meetings. However, as all of us know, numerous members refuse to attend any services except for Sunday morning, and all efforts to encourage them to be present more often appears to accomplish little.

Why do so many Christians miss all church activities except for one time a week? There may be several reasons, but it seems that the most common excuse is that the New Testament never commands one to attend more than once. For example, one might object that since the Bible never commands one to attend on Wednesday night, then it is not necessary for one to go to church on Wednesday night in order to go to Heaven. Let us consider this objection.

Over the years, I have considered this objection a great deal. While it is true the Bible never mentions attending services on Wednesday night, that does not mean it is unimportant and unnecessary to attend such services. The basic attitude seems to be that a person wants to go Heaven; therefore, he or she is willing to do whatever is necessary to please God so that one can enter Heaven at death. However, he does not want to do anything more than what is absolutely essential. In other words, he is looking for the *minimum standard* that God requires. He is eager to do that but no more!

What is wrong with this attitude? I think that as we consider this, there are at least three things wrong with such an attitude. **The first one is that such a standard does not exist.** God never gives a minimum standard, and **He is not looking for a minimum obedience.** He is looking for the

maximum. God continually encourages us to do more than what is necessary. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged a willingness to go the second mile (Matthew 5:41). In the context, a Roman soldier could compel a Jew to carry his burden for one mile but no more. Jesus encouraged one to do more than what was necessary, to volunteer to go an extra mile. In Matthew 5:47, He asked the question, *“What do you do more than others?”* That means in order to really make an impression on people, one must be willing to do more than what is expected or required. As Christians, we should not try to do only the minimum. We must be willing to do as much as we can, which is the opposite attitude than what we are discussing.

An extra church assembly for preaching most of a Saturday in India.



The second thing wrong with this attitude is that it shows a lack of love for God. We must remember that one can never make it to Heaven based on our works. Heaven is a gift from God and given to us by His grace based on our faith in Jesus. Such a great gift coming from such love should motivate us to love Him in return, which also means we will obey and serve Him. In John 14:15 Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* God wants loving service from His children, and if we truly love God, we will do as much as we can for Him.

Does a loving parent ever wonder and ask what is the least amount he can give to his child and still be considered a good parent? Of course not! A loving

parent desires to do as much as he can for his child. In like manner, if one truly loves God, why does one seek to do the *least* that he can do? God has given us an indescribable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15); therefore, how can we respond with an attitude that I need to do only what is absolutely necessary?

The third thing is that such an attitude as we are considering shows a lack of love for our fellow Christians. The church is our spiritual family and is often compared to our physical family. Most families are connected by love, and such love motivates the members to be with one another as much as possible. When one member neglects such meeting times or desires to be with his family on only a few occasions, it exhibits a lack of love for his family. We are to love our fellow Christians to such an extent that we are willing to die for them (1 John 3:16). In practical terms that means that we are willing to help them in whatever way we can, both physically and spiritually (1 John 3:17-18; Galatians 6:1-2). We can only do that by assembling together. When we neglect assembling with our spiritual family, it demonstrates a lack of love for it, just as neglecting family gatherings demonstrates a lack of love.

In summary, I believe that neglecting assemblies of the church demonstrates a far deeper spiritual problem than merely not going to church, as many apparently think. Many ask the question, “Will I be lost for not going to church on Sunday night or Wednesday night, etc.?” No, one will not be lost merely because he did not attend Bible study on Wednesday night. However, that is only a symptom of a deeper problem, a lack of love for God and a desire to grow spiritually. Those deficiencies may well cause a person to be lost, and that should be cause for concern.✝

David's Devotional

“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith” (Proverbs 15:17). Wow! What a **true statement** that is! Give it some **real thought!** We often measure value by the **things** we have! If one is eating a stalled ox (“the fatted calf”), we often consider him wealthy! Nice juicy steaks, filet mignon, ribs— for what more could one ask? However, if one is eating herbs (vegetables), we may say he is poor. Beans, potatoes, corn—poor old thing! I’d rather have beans and taters with my loving wife and church family than to have steak with people who hate me and want to harm me! Peace of mind and loving relationships are far better than **things & stuff!** How sad to be surrounded by all kinds of wonderful things but having no one with whom to share them! Our relationships are far too valuable to put a price tag on or trade them for a “stalled ox”!



Paradoxes of Christianity: Wise as Serpents & Harmless as Doves

Shane Fisher

The dictionary defines a paradox as “a proposition or statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd yet in fact expresses a possible truth” (www.dictionary.com).

Paradoxes are used frequently throughout the Bible to help us meditate on deeper truths. The paradox under consideration here is that a Christian must be wise as a serpent yet harmless as a dove.

In the context of Matthew 10:16–21, Jesus was speaking to His disciples who He was about to send on His Limited Commission to the lost house of Israel. Even though these were direct statements made towards them, we can still apply the same principles today.

The Sketches of Biblical History

God uses His creation to teach us great lessons. For example, ants teach us how to work hard and not to be lazy (Proverbs 6:6-9). We want to examine how the serpent and the dove are sketched through biblical history. The Bible teaches us that snakes are: (1) a symbol of evil and wickedness, (2) a symbol of danger and punishment, (3) a symbol of life and (4) a symbol of beauty and craftiness or wisdom.

- **A Symbol of Evil and Wickedness:** From the beginning of the Bible to its end (Genesis 3:1, 15; Revelation 20:2), Scripture portrays the devil as that serpent of old who tempted the first couple.

- **A Symbol of Danger and Punishment:** Snakes pose a genuine danger because many of them are venomous. They will often strike their prey from secret places and attack without warning (Genesis 49:17; Amos 5:19).

- **A Symbol of Life:**

Not everything in the Bible is negative about snakes. For instance, the children of Israel were rebellious against the Lord, and He punished them by sending snakes to bite them. Yet, He also showed mercy to those who would look upon the image of the serpent. If they looked at it by faith, they would live (Numbers 21:4-9). Jesus used this historical account to show that if anyone trusted and obeyed Him, then they would also live eternally (John 3:14-15).



- **A Symbol of Beauty and Craftiness & Wisdom:** The writer of Proverbs was certainly in awe of a snake on a rock (Proverbs 30:18-19). Jesus, the Creator of all, called snakes crafty or wise (“Serpent” 773).

The Bible teaches us certain things about doves: (1) a sacrifice, (2) the softness of a dove, faithfulness, (3) a sign of peace and (4) a sign of

silliness and senselessness.

- **Sacrifice:** It was used for a burnt offering (Leviticus 1:14), and it was a sacrifice made by those who were poor (Leviticus 14:21-22).
- **The Softness of a Dove, Faithfulness:** The Song of Solomon likens the lover to a dove (1:15; 2:14; 4:1; 5:2, 12; 6:9). A dove is known for its softness, the beauty of its feathers and also for its commitment to its mate.
- **A Sign of Peace:** Noah sent out a dove from the ark, and it finally came back with an olive leaf in its beak, showing that the waters had receded from the earth (Genesis 8:8-10). There was finally peace shown after a year of judgment.
- **A Sign of Silliness and Senselessness:** Doves are known for these characteristics (Hosea 7:11-12). The name “Jonah” means “dove.” Jonah certainly lived up to his name by trying to flee from the presence of the Lord. That was senseless! (“Dove” 216).

The Symbols Used By Jesus

When Jesus gave the Limited Commission (Matthew 10:5-16), He taught the disciples about (1) dependence upon their Heavenly Father, (2) directions to be given to them and (3) dangers they were going to face in the future. Jesus used three animals for illustrations to help His disciples to prepare for what was coming. The first symbol was a sheep, which is known for its foolishness and as easy prey for predators. A sheep needs providence, protection and guidance (Psalm 23). The second symbol was a serpent. Disciples must display wisdom that a snake also has. The third symbol was a dove. Disciples must try to display the harmlessness of a dove.




The Standards To Apply Toward the Principle

How can we apply this paradoxical principle: *“Be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove?”* In being wise as a serpent, we must grow in our knowledge of God’s Word (2 Peter 3:18). Do we have a strong Christian worldview? Can we tell others why we are Christians only and not members of a manmade denomination? Can we tell others why we practice what

we do in our daily lives, our morals, our worship, the organization of the church and the plan of salvation?

In being harmless as a dove, we must learn to love our enemies and to treat them as we would want to be treated (Matthew 5:38-48; 7:12). Some enemies, seeing our perpetuating and enduring love, will break down their barriers (Romans 12:17-21). It is biblically right to be innocent of evil. ***“For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil”*** (Romans 16:19). You do not have to engage in evil to know it. Joseph did not have to engage in adultery (Genesis 39). We do not have to engage in every sin to see the consequences of it (cf. Romans 13:11–13).

Why should we balance out this principle? We need to do so to understand the times (1 Chronicles 12:32). We live in very strange times where people do not believe in absolute truth. There are critics who charge Christianity falsely with being anti-woman, anti-science, homophobic, etc. We need to know how to handle their arguments with meekness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). If we as Christians will display the wisdom of a snake and the harmlessness of a dove, we will be able to reach more people who are enslaved in these false philosophies and doctrines.

How should we balance out this principle? We live in such a time where face-to-face, personal communication has become rare. Therefore, it is very difficult to develop proper relationships with people today. It has been said rightly that truth without relationships leads to arrogance while relationships without truth leads to apathy. The Lord Jesus displayed both having a relationship and teaching the truth with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15) and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-45). Jesus was indeed wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. He was able to correct the false notions of the Pharisee and the Samaritan woman. He won them over by displaying and balancing out this paradoxical principle. May we follow in the footsteps of our Master. 

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1932—2008

The Compassion of Christianity

J.C. Choate

There is much in the Bible about mercy toward the needy. In Judaism, God said, *“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless all the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 24:19).*

Mercy and compassion are also taught in the New Testament. Christians are commanded to *“...visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).* James explained even further, *“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:15-17).*

Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructed in Galatians 6:2, *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* Jesus Himself gave the classic example of the compassionate neighbor in the account of the traveler who fell among thieves and was robbed, beaten and left destitute (Luke 10:25-37). Two hypocritical religious leaders saw the man and passed by on the other side of the road, ignoring his plight. Then a stranger, not even of the victim’s own nationality, stopped, treated his wounds, sat him on his donkey and took him to an inn where he made provisions for the continued care of the man. Jesus praised the “good Samaritan” as being the real neighbor.

Often Christianity is portrayed as being socialistic in nature because of the account in Acts 2:44-45. ***“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”*** While this passage is used as an example of Christianity in action, it does not portray the complete picture. Yes, people sold their possessions and shared with those in need. Why were some in such dire straits? Some who read this part of the account would not be aware that the church at this beginning point of its existence was made up of many who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feasts of Passover and Pentecost. Acts 2:9-11 says that the multitude was made up of visitors from sixteen parts of the world! These people had come from great distances, at great expense, for an expected short period of time. After their conversion, however, they stayed on in Jerusalem to learn more about the Christ, His kingdom and their new life from the teachings of the apostles. As their funds ran out, Christians from the area began to sell their own possessions so that the needs of all could be met.

Later, in Acts 11:28-30, a great famine was prophesied, and Christians in Antioch decided to send relief to the brethren in Judea, ***“each according to his ability.”***

Think with me. If it had been the continued practice, since the church began numerous years earlier, for all Christians everywhere to sell all of their possessions and to divide them among the other Christians of the area, the folks in Antioch would not have had any possessions to share (each according to his ability) with the destitute Christians in Judea. Obviously, the situation in Jerusalem had been the exception to the norm. Everyone selling his possessions, and all Christians in an area sharing what they had, was a description only of an emergency situation. In normal circumstances, when there was a need, Christians made voluntary contributions ***“according to his ability.”***

Does God want people to selflessly support one another financially when there is no crisis? Paul commanded, by direction of the Holy Spirit, ***“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”*** (2 Thessalonians 3:10). He explained further, ***“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need”*** (Ephesians 4:28). Obviously, from these passages, and numerous others that could be given, God expects

every person to be both industrious for himself and selfless toward those who are in need. This is the compassion of Christianity, not the socialist idea of taking from everybody so that some centralized power can disperse at will to those who have been made beggars by the system.

God's command to His people is to ***"...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"*** (Mark 16:15). Why did He not command us to go into all the world and give to the poor? Jesus Himself stated, ***"...For you have the poor with you always..."*** (Matthew 26:11).

If Christians gave everything they had to help the needy, it would not solve the world's problems, and all of the resources of the church would be consumed in benevolent work, with nothing left for the preaching of the Gospel to save souls.

Man may be shortsighted, thinking that physical help is what is most important, but humans forget that God is part of the equation. As was promised by Jesus, ***"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you"*** (Luke 6:38).




As individual Christians give to God, He will bless them even physically as a result. As individual congregations engage in God's work of evangelizing their own communities, they are instructed, ***"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith"*** (Galatians 6:10). It is the responsibility of local congregations to respond, as they are able, to the suffering of those around them. God, as a result, will bless those individuals and congregations both spiritually and physically, ***"...good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over..."*** 

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5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

God's Throne

Paula Bates


1. To him who _____ I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with ____ Father on His _____. Revelation 3:21
2. Then I saw a great _____ throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven _____, and there was found no place for them. Revelation 20:11
3. But the _____ shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for _____. Psalm 9:7
4. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the _____ all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the _____ of the Lord. Ezekiel 1:28
5. Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the _____ of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his _____, and all the hosts of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.” 1 Kings 22:19
6. And He who _____ by heaven, swears by the throne of _____ and by him who sits on it. Matthew 23:22



- Answers:**
1. Overcomes, My, throne
 2. White, fled away
 3. Lord, judgment
 4. Brightness, glory
 5. Word, throne
 6. Swears, God

HE WAS BORN TO RESCUE US

Cliff Holmes

The Bible tells us of the Messiah who was born of low estate, cradled in a manger, heralded by angels, greeted by lowly shepherds and honored by rich wise men. He did all of this in order to come and rescue humanity from the penalty of sin. What He did rises above all earthly comprehension. Two thousand years ago, God Himself became human in order to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. When Jesus became a man, He understood and proclaimed that He was born to rescue. *“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour”* (John 12:27 NKJV). *“For even 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). Let us praise our wonderful Savior—Jesus Christ—who was born to rescue all who will accept His offer of salvation. *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved...”* (Mark 16:16). 



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

A Few Great Blessings in Christ Jesus

Donald R. Fox

- **Great Faith, Hope and Love:** *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”* (1 Corinthians 13:13 KJV). *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us”* (Ephesians 2:4).
- **Great Mystery of Godliness in Christ:** *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory”* (1 Timothy 3:16).
- **Great Salvation in Christ**
Jesus: *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him”* (Hebrews 2:3).
- **Greatness of Power:** *“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power”* (Ephesians 1:19).
- **Great Precious Promises in Christ:** *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (2 Peter 1:4).



Donald R. Fox worships with the Mayfield Church of Christ and resides in Saltillo, Mississippi, USA.

GOD

Our Unchanging God

Ernest S. Underwood

“For I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). We serve an unchanging God.

We live in a society today that has adopted a philosophy of political correctness, making whatever changes it has to in order to please as many as possible. In such a world of changes, it is good to know that we have a God who does not change. Let’s look at some ways in which He does not change.

- **God is unchanging in His Attributes.**

Righteousness, power, benevolence and wisdom.

- **God is unchanging in His attitude.**

Toward sin, toward the sinner, toward His faithful people.

- **God is unchanging in His demands.**

For submission, for love and loyalty, for character, for service.

- **God is unchanging in not showing respect of persons.** He saves those who obey Him, but He condemns those who fail or refuse to obey (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Are you prepared to meet this unchanging God?



Ernest S. Underwood is a preacher as well as a missionary to India. He resides in Doraville, Georgia, USA

GOD

He Made Reconciliation

Mark McWhorter

Hebrews 2:17 says that Jesus was a faithful High Priest in that He made reconciliation for the sins of the people. The word **“reconciliation”** (KJV) is a big word that means “to appease.” The Greek word is *“hilaskomai.”* It refers to the role of offering atonement and making peace.

All mankind has sinned. Every person commits sin. Sin separates man from God. There is no peace between God and a sinner. However, Christ made that peace possible. He made reconciliation. He offered the atonement sacrifice.

What did He offer? He offered Himself. He was the atonement sacrifice. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 and Romans 5:11. Both of these Scriptures tell us Jesus is our



atonement. He is also the One Who offered the atonement.

First John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10 say He is our **“propitiation.”** That is another big word. It means “atonement sacrifice.” It comes from the Greek word *“hilasmos.”* Jesus was the Sacrifice, and He was the One Who sacrificed. He was a Great High Priest who offered Himself so that there could be peace between man and God.

Study your Bible. Learn all about our High Priest and Reconciler. ✝

Mark McWhorter has written daily devotionals for youth for decades. He lives in Pell City, Alabama, USA.


The Beginning of Wisdom

George McNulty

Proverbs 1:7 says, ***“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*** This is one of my favorite proverbs because not only does it tell us about the majesty of God but also of the great value in learning. There are many who would seek to replace the wisdom of the Word of God with the ignorance of the prideful. These people would seek to replace God as the supreme being with themselves or another lesser, imagined power. These people are described as fools in Psalm 14:1.

In the Holy Scriptures, we find the true source of knowledge: our mighty God. The ***“fear”*** mentioned in the verse is not the kind of which we immediately think in English, which is a “terror.” Rather, as the *Pulpit Commentary* says of “terror” here, it means “to fear or reverence,” which is a “holy fear.” It is a fear by which we are afraid to offend God...that fear of Jehovah which is elsewhere described as “to hate evil” (Proverbs 8:13). This fear to offend God is the beginning of true wisdom, for if we keep God and His will, and use that as our motivation, we will surely prosper in our lives.

God is the source of all reality and, therefore, of all that is good and all that we should desire to know. However, we are told of those who don’t want to know the path of a God-centered knowledge. A great many people have decided that, for whatever reason, to hate God is the beginning of wisdom. Atheism has little to offer its believer except that of a moral-free environment, in which a person can indulge in whatever he or she wants without fear of consequences. In this respect, it sounds very much like old fashioned idolatry where worshipers made gods to suit their own desires. This kind of belief offers its follower only a cold grave and a meaningless universe, which they think comes from nothing, becomes nothing and offers only sorrow.

It’s no wonder the Holy Bible describes those who adhere to such godless doctrines as fools. The Proverbs are full of wise sayings and deep thoughts. They encourage us and admonish us, and in Proverbs 1, we learn where to begin, by acknowledging the simple truth that God is. 

George McNulty preaches for the College Avenue Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.

John 1:1 and the Deity of Christ

Jeremy W. Barrier

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1). While this verse at the beginning of the Gospel of John may be brief, it is clearly one of the most distinctive verses in all of the New Testament. It demonstrates an uncomplicated, direct claim by John that Jesus of Nazareth was the very Divine Being who created the heavens and the earth!

John, more strongly than any other Gospel writer, declared that he believed Jesus of Nazareth to be one with God, while at the same time, that He also did, in fact, come in the flesh and indwell a physical, material body. This claim is made clearer here than in any other place in the New Testament.

Within more advanced circles of theology, this is known as a “High Christology.” In other words, Jesus and the Father are one. One can compare the other three Gospel writers, who all record varying degrees of Christology, but with less strength than John’s Christology. As a point of comparison, Mark in no uncertain terms gives Jesus several distinct and important titles. He calls Him the *“Christ”* (Mark 1:1), which is a Greek word meaning *“anointed one,”* specifically referring to one who has been chosen by God to lead Israel. However, a king is a far cry from a *divine being*. Mark recorded extensively through the voices of demons, unclean spirits and even Gentile centurions that Jesus is the *“Son of God”* (Mark 1:24; 5:7; 15:39). While being called a child of a divine being is indeed impressive, it is nonetheless not definitive that a son of a god is indeed a god. As a point of comparison from Greek mythology, Homer doesn’t call Helen of Troy a divine being. By contrast, according to the myth, she was the child of a diving being, namely Zeus, who mated with a human woman, namely Leda.

The highest claim for divinity in Mark’s Gospel record is Mark 5:7, where demons, named Legion, cry out to Jesus, *“What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God...”* This statement acknowledges that Jesus could be the son of the Creator, but it is still indirect and stated

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through the mouth of demons, subsequently unaddressed directly by Jesus. A similar exchange took place in Jesus' trial before the high priest in Mark 14:62, where Jesus did acknowledge that He is the ***"Son of the Blessed One..."*** However, while all of these claims are indeed impressive, they are a "low" Christology. Of course, the point of this comparison between John's Gospel account and Mark's Gospel account is to show that John made a strong assertion about the nature of Jesus' being.


In seeing Jesus as one with the Father, John made an important point about Jesus (John 17:21-26). In fact, if one reads through the entirety of the Book of John, the importance of believing that Jesus is one with the Father becomes an essential part of a process, a process that leads to salvation. The reasoning is as follows: First, John points out that the Word was with God and that the Word was God. The next detail is that the Word ***"...became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"*** (John 1:14). In other words, the Word became a human, and we, as humans, were able to behold the Divine!

This is then followed by the acknowledgment that this Word that had become flesh had a name, Jesus, and He bore a specific title already addressed above, ***"Christ"*** (1:17). It is not simply knowing and understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Word, and is one with the glorified Father, but John encouraged his readers to place their trust in Jesus—in other words, to "believe" Him. This is not just a remote, abstract idea. This fact has real consequences for the reader. John made it clear that the Father's sending of Jesus was an overt and transparent statement of God's overwhelming love and compassion for a suffering and hurting humanity that was (and is) in desperate need of salvation (John 3:16).

John's point is that Jesus, as a representative of the Divine Father and Creator, came to offer a way for humanity to be redeemed. The critical step, of course, is making the decision to believe on him (John 3:16-17). In fact, this is made abundantly clear when Jesus stated, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life"*** and that no one may come to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). Furthermore, John reasserted the importance of this claim in the final section of the book, when he noted that ***"many other signs truly did Jesus in***

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the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31).

In conclusion, as we read John 1:1, my hope is that we will see a tremendous and beautiful idea being unfolded before us in our mind’s eye, an idea that demonstrates the significance and stature of Jesus, an idea that shows us the overwhelming level of love and compassion of our Creator for us as His creation and an idea that will make it clear that God desires for humanity to be saved, if we will place our trust in Him. Ultimately, may we clearly see that Jesus is the perfect representation of God, by which we were finally allowed to behold the glory of God and all of the grace and truth of God that personifies His relationship with humanity. What an amazing idea and an amazing verse indeed! 

Jeremy W. Barrier teaches at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, USA.


ONE CHURCH in the BIBLE			
Time	Place	Founder	Church
Pentecost	Jerusalem	Christ	Church of Christ
606 A.D.	Rome, Italy	Boniface III	Roman Catholic
1520	Germany	Martin Luther	Lutheran
1534	England	King Henry VIII	Church of England
1536	Switzerland	John Calvin	Presbyterian
1607	Holland	John Smythe	Baptist
1739	England	John Wesley	Methodist
1830	USA	Joseph Smith	Latter Day Saints
1830	USA	William Miller	7th Day Adventists
1866	USA	Mary Baker Eddy	Christian Scientist
1872	USA	Charles Russell	Jehovah Witnesses
Mike Huff			

Biblical Interpretation

Tom Baxley

Interpreting the Bible is an in-depth subject that can't adequately be covered in a brief article, so here I will just remind us of a few principles to remember so that we can make the most of our Bible studies. **First, consider the original audience.** Though the Bible was written **for** us, it was not written **to** us. Therefore, not everything will apply to us directly. For example, we are not required to build an ark like Noah, build a tabernacle like Moses or to have the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit like the first century church did. We still need to read those parts of the Bible and apply the principles found where possible (i.e., obedience, faith, service, etc.).

Second, consider the timing. Some things were permitted or commanded under the Old Covenant that are not permitted or commanded under the New Covenant. For instance, the Old Testament commanded certain feast days to be kept and foods from which to abstain, while the New Testament gives no command for feast days or abstinence from food (except blood, Acts 15:29). Also remember that the accounts in the Gospel records took place under the Old Covenant; this is why the thief on the cross is not a valid argument against baptism, as some think, since neither had the church been established yet (Acts 2:47) nor had the Great Commission baptism been implemented yet (Mark 16:16).

Third, consider the unity. The Bible was written by men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), God-breathing the message into them (2 Timothy 3:16). This means that the Bible is not going to contradict itself. Therefore, if one finds two verses that seem to contradict each another, that person missed something in one or both passages that led to an incorrect conclusion. 

[Editor's Note: Right thinking and objective analysis of Scripture contributes to a proper understanding of God's communication to humanity, as well as its appropriate application to people today. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

THE WORD OF GOD

The Prophets' Desire Is Ours


Gary C. Hampton

God's prophets endured hardship, persecution and death to tell forth the inspired Word of God. Yet, they did not have the plan of salvation revealed to them. They delivered the key elements without understanding how and to whom they would be applied. Angels also wanted to know how God would save man, but that plan was reserved for Christ's followers (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Prophets wrote Scripture as the Holy Spirit directed them (2 Peter 1:20-21). Peter indicated they did not comprehend some of the things they wrote but searched their own writings to gain understanding of God's plan. Jesus told His followers that astonishing truth (Matthew 13:16-17).

Moses wrote of God's plan for the seed of woman to crush the head of Satan, but he did not realize the seed would be the Christ (Genesis 3:15). Isaiah told of the suffering servant and the glory that would follow, but he did not understand it would take place on the cross (Isaiah 53). David wrote a song anticipating the glorious resurrection that would follow the suffering, but he did not fully appreciate the powerful events (Psalm 16:8-11).

The singer of Israel recorded the words that would be spoken on the cross, but he did not realize Who would speak them (Psalm 22). The Messianic prophet spoke of a kingdom into which people from all nations would flow (Isaiah 2:1-5). He also described the painful beating God's Sin-Bearer would receive, leaving him unrecognizable (52:13-15). Hosea told of those who had not been God's people seeing a day in which they would be called sons of the living God (Hosea 1:10; 2:23).

Christians are greatly blessed. We come to know the unmerited favor God bestowed through the offering of His Son (Hebrews 11:39-40). Members of the church receive the very understanding for which the prophets longed. Praise God for the blessings we have in Christ. 

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

THE WORD OF GOD

THE CALL FOR OBEDIENCE

Michael L. King

The children of Israel had not long been freed from Egyptian bondage until corruption and disobedience entered their encampment. For approximately 400 years, they had been held captive by the Pharaohs of Egypt in the area of Goshen. The oppression became so great that God removed them from there through the leadership of Moses. Murmuring soon began and stubbornness prevailed. When Moses went up to Horeb (Mt. Sinai) to commune with God and to receive the Law, he returned to find a golden, graven calf, to which they gave worship. This no doubt was a preview of coming attractions and expected behavior (Exodus 32).

Before the Israelites entered into the land of promise, Moses gathered them together and gave instruction. Moses would not be able to accompany them, but he nevertheless wanted them to be reminded of the will of God as they entered their new homeland. Their behavior was to be a demonstration of the mighty hand of God that had worked and would work in their lives to bring glory to God. In Deuteronomy 4, Moses referred to God's commands by saying:

So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:6-8).

We must remember that there were only two to enter the Promised Land, Caleb and Joshua, of the original adult travelers from Egypt. Moses was speaking to a second generation of Jews, who may or may not have remembered all that God had done for their ancestors.

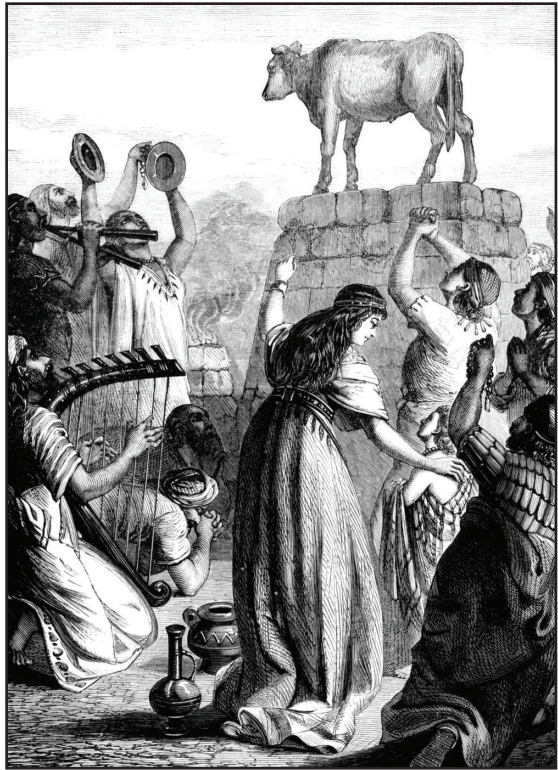
In the meeting, when he called the people together, Moses admonished all the people to remember God's Word at all times, to be reminded of God's

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benevolent nature and to draw it to the attention of others who might in turn revere and acknowledge God. So, in Deuteronomy 6:2, Moses made a call to obedience. The people were told to ***“keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.”*** Chapter 4 was to produce reverential fear, and chapter 6 provided them with information as to how to remember and do the will of God. Chapter 6:4-10 has been called the Magna Carta of the home, which can guarantee the happiness and success of the family in the purpose of God.


They were told first of all to “shama,” Hebrew for “hear,” which means to “hear and understand or to hear with discernment.” They were to know God intimately and personally. The truths of Scripture were to be the means for guiding them into this personal knowledge and relationship with God and the placement of their trust in Him. Moses knew they would struggle with “conflicting masters” and misplaced “treasures of their hearts.”

They were instructed to place before them the Word of God as signs on their doorposts, gateposts, hands, heads and eyes. They were to have God always before them in their private abode to remind them how to behave



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and for it to travel with them when going out to show to others their love, confidence and trust in God. It appears as if Moses was speaking figuratively when instructing them to have the Word on their doors, hands, head, eyes, etc., so it would impact their private and public lives. The Jews took him to be speaking literally, so they made “Mezuzahs,” which were containers to place on the right door post with a small leather scroll enclosed with the words from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 written on it. Their thinking was that the ones on the door would remind them how to behave in their home. It pointed at a 30-degree angle toward the inside of the house and a third of the way from the top. The one on the gate reminded them how to behave before others when going out. They also wore them on their heads and arms, called “tefillins,” usually worn during prayer. They wore them on their heads to direct their thinking, near their eyes to always have the proper path in view and on their hands or arms so they might always do the right things. These were reminders of how good God had been to them.

We, today, must constantly be reminded of God’s expectations of us and to model the Word as we teach it. We must be enriched by the Word on a regular basis lest we forget. The coming generations will never know the testimonies, statutes and judgments of the Lord unless we remember and remind them. An old song says it correctly, “All the things in this life that are precious to me, they’re all borrowed, they’re not mine at all...Lord I am human and humans forget, so remind me, remind me, dear Lord!” 

Michael L. King preaches for the New Albany congregation in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

David’s Devotional: Why Should I Be a Light? Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16, “Ye are the light of the world...” Then He compared us to a “city that is set on a hill” and a “candle” that “giveth light unto all that are in the house.” Then, He said, “Let your light so shine.” We should “shine” like a “city” or a “candle.” How do we “shine”? Jesus answered that question, “that they may see your good works”! Why should we “shine”? Jesus answered that, too! When men see one’s good works, they will “glorify your Father which is in heaven”! Do you want to glorify God? Then, do “good works” and be a light!

THE WORD OF GOD


THE BIBLE IS FULL OF QUESTIONS!

Jason Floyd

A retired USAF Colonel said, “There are many books with questions about the Bible, but the Bible is filled with its own questions.” The King James Version has 3,326 questions! Answers to most of them are found in the Bible itself. Read these important Bible questions and answers.

Death is not something about which we usually want to think. Typically, the younger and healthier we are, the more we push death to the back of our minds. Unfortunately, when our health fails, we lose loved ones or our current life situation seems hopeless, we must face the reality that life is short and hard. During these times, we want to know if there is something more than this life and whether there is something other than a rock with our name on it, fading over time until we are completely forgotten.

Such was the case as Job was suffering through some of the worst times a man can experience. After he lost his children, health and wealth all in a single afternoon, he asked the same question that has been asked generation upon generation after him. *“If a man dies, shall he live again?”* (Job 14:14). Job, although faithful to God, did not have the entire revelation of God’s Word as we do today. It was not until Jesus’ arrival that mankind was able to understand the precious gift offered to us.

As Jesus died on the cross, was buried and resurrected, He made it possible that we, too, can experience a resurrection of life. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, Paul taught the Christians, *“In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has also come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ we are made alive.”* What a beautiful thought! No matter how much pain and suffering we may have on earth, we have been promised a resurrection—not a resurrection into another difficult life, but a life with **no suffering, no decay and no death!** Jesus said that we can begin right now to lay up our treasures in our new home, Heaven (Matthew 6:20)! Years after Job asked his question, Jesus gave His people the answer to Job’s question. The answer is a resounding **“Yes”!** 

Jason Floyd preaches the Gospel in Bennington, Vermont, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses (Hebrews 13:17; Romans 13:1-7)

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (Romans 13:1-7).

Must Christians Obey?

Of course we realize that it is imperative that we obey God, reverently reading and studying His Word, and shaping our lives according to His commands. Yet, there are others that we must also obey.

In the home, He has placed husbands in the role of leadership and responsibility over the wife and children (Ephesians 5-6)

In the church, He instructs, "...those who rule over you... for they watch for your souls. Knowing that His earthly family would need supervision and guidance, God instructed the appointment of qualified elders and deacons over individual congregations (1 Timothy 3).

In the world itself, God commands that we obey our secular rulers and laws, paying taxes and giving the proper respect to the ones who are responsible for the orderliness and safety of their citizens.

Must Christians Obey?

The clear statement is made in Romans 13:1 that God, Himself, is the one who raises up rulers and takes them down. Even though He does not overrule "free will" in individual humans, God is the One in overall control of the world until our Lord returns and judgment comes!

Guilt and Regret

Derek Broome

I have heard people say it time and time again, “If I could go back, I would do things differently.” Just like most people, I hate thinking about the sin that has been in my life. I hate knowing that I ever hurt or disappointed other people. I also hate knowing that I sinned against my God. On a good day, when I think about the things of the past, I stop and praise God that I am no longer living the kind of life characteristic of me in the past. However, on the bad days, when my faith is shaken, I can find myself dwelling in the past and in regret. I believe there is something that we all need to remember when we find ourselves dwelling in regret.

As Christians, we need to remember the God Who we serve and the forgiveness He so graciously offers. I know there are those who try to escape any personal responsibility for sin, and I hope these individuals will repent and come back to the Lord. Yet, we also have many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who struggle with regret and guilt even when they have done everything that they need to do in order to be forgiven. I think we all, and especially those who struggle with things like this, need to remember that we do not have to live with guilt. While there may be things for which we were once guilty, for which, therefore, we may experience earthly consequences, we do not have to live with guilt before God. In 2 Corinthians 7:10 and 1 John 1:9, we can see how to get one’s relationship back into good standing with God.

In addition to not having to live in guilt, we also do not have to dwell in regret. That does not mean we forget everything we



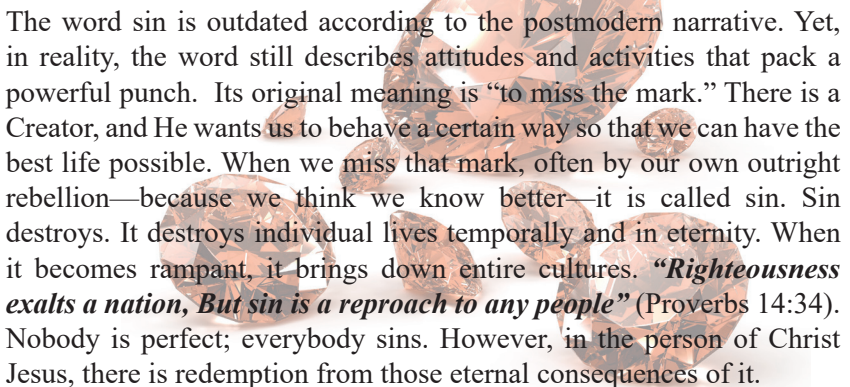
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have ever done. In fact, remembering sin in our past can help us remain humble as we live for God. Yet, dwelling in regret and guilt holds us back from living the Christian life that we ought to live. Do we really believe God when He says He will forgive us? I think at times we fail to grab hold of the salvation that has been offered to us because we are still scared of not being good enough. I think it also scares us to give up control to anybody other than ourselves.

The reality is that we are not good enough. That's why we needed and continue to need Christ. That is not a statement meant to devalue us as Christians. God knew that we would struggle and sin, and that is why He offers us a way back through His Son. It is amazing to serve a God Who loves us so much that He gave His Son to die for us as sinners. It is also such a great blessing as Christians to be part of the church and to be surrounded by people who want to see us come back when we have sinned (James 5:16; Galatians 6:1). Let us no longer let guilt and regret control our lives, but let us instead continue to give our lives to Christ and to praise God for the forgiveness that we have from Him. †

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

Robison's Rubies



The word sin is outdated according to the postmodern narrative. Yet, in reality, the word still describes attitudes and activities that pack a powerful punch. Its original meaning is “to miss the mark.” There is a Creator, and He wants us to behave a certain way so that we can have the best life possible. When we miss that mark, often by our own outright rebellion—because we think we know better—it is called sin. Sin destroys. It destroys individual lives temporally and in eternity. When it becomes rampant, it brings down entire cultures. ***“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people”*** (Proverbs 14:34). Nobody is perfect; everybody sins. However, in the person of Christ Jesus, there is redemption from those eternal consequences of it.

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Good Enough

Robert Johnson

In the course of a religious discussion, it's not uncommon to hear someone say, "I'm good enough. I'm just as good as" this person or that person. In one's mind, such is justification for one's lifestyle, that if God is pleased with this person, then surely, He is pleased with me. Sometimes, one will offer a qualification to it, as well. For example, people may say, "I'm good enough because I believe in God." Yet, believing in God isn't enough by itself.

James wrote, ***"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder"*** (James 2:19). While faith is essential to a relationship with God, **a faith that doesn't respond in obedience isn't good enough.**

Others may say, "I'm good enough, because I have served God in the past." We know there is no way we can earn our salvation through our own merit. Jesus told the parable of an unworthy slave in Luke 17:7-10 and concluded, ***"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"*** While past deeds are commendable, the past alone isn't good enough, as **life in Christ is always in the present.** We must obey today to please the Lord. ***"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching***



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forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

One may also say, “I’m good enough, because I don’t do all the bad things other people do.” It’s easy to compare ourselves with those we believe to be worse than we are, but no doubt there are others who could do the same with us. Everyone has a sin problem (Romans 3:23), and any sin in which a person persists will condemn him or her before God. ***“The wages of sin is death”*** (Romans 6:23). Just because one’s sin list is different than another person’s sin list doesn’t make one good enough before God.

The truth of the matter is we’re not good enough. We can concur with Isaiah, who wrote, ***“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away”*** (Isaiah 64:6). We need God’s grace and the cleansing of Christ’s blood to stand acceptable before God. This doesn’t nullify living a righteous life, but they are what enables us to do so. John said, ***“But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin”*** (1 John 1:7). **Our walk in the light is essential for the blood of Jesus to continue cleansing us from all sin.**

In reality, the child of God should say, “I’m not good enough, but God loves me, and with Christ working in my life, I can grow and mature each day. I can please Him.” This is what Paul believed about himself, about what God was doing in him, though he called himself the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). ***“For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me”*** (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). May we yield our lives to God and live each day in His will for us, so that through Jesus Christ, He will graciously give us eternal life. ***“We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning; but He who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him”*** (1 John 5:18). ✝

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

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True Liberation

Raymond Elliott

We hear a great deal today about being liberated from various things such as moral standards, authorities and various relationships. People are desirous of freedom, for better or for worse. Wars have been fought to free people from tyranny, slavery and oppression. Movements are begun to seek release from anything and everything that might restrain people too much. Even among religious circles, there are organizations and individuals that seek to rid themselves of any absolute and objective authority such as the Bible. We are also aware of movements



among worldly minded people to reject any and all set rules of moral and ethical standards. Thus, you have the philosophies as 'Situation Ethics,' 'Existentialism' and 'The New Morality' to illustrate the point.

However, we speak presently of true liberation and the true 'Liberator,'

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Jesus Christ, who came to liberate (to set free, release) men and women from that terrible ‘master’ (Satan) and bondage (sin). The world has never known freedom, happiness and peace of mind as can be had and enjoyed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Mankind has sought freedom in earthly pleasures, doctrines of men and worldly wisdom; however, this type of seeking has been in vain. The Master Teacher and Freedom Fighter exclaimed to a group of Jews on one occasion that, ***“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:31-32). Thus, the agency of release from the fetters of sin, sorrow, doubt, captivity and death is the Truth, the Word of God. Jesus also stated, ***“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”*** (John 8:36).

Paul wrote in Romans 6:17-18, ***“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”*** That form the Romans obeyed was the likeness of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, which are the basis of the Gospel of our Lord (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). They had died to sin in true repentance, were buried with the Lord in baptism and had been raised to ***“walk in newness of life”*** (Romans 6:1-6). This is the same manner in which people today can be set free from sin. The apostle Paul also wrote of being made free from the law of sin and death through Jesus Christ (Romans 8:1-2). Furthermore, in Galatians 5:1, Paul said, ***“For freedom did Christ set us free...”*** (KJV). Whether we speak of being free from the Law of Moses or from sin, the principle is the same. The truly liberated persons in this world are those individuals who have willingly surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ and have become servants of righteousness. ✝

Raymond Elliott is a semi-retired preacher who lives in Prattville, Alabama, USA.

Kenney's Pennies

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7 NKJV). God does not favor us based on these types of externalities but on the internalities of the heart, mind, soul and spirit. We need to use the same measure.

Verse Search



1. By what were the Corinthians saved? (v. 1-2)
2. What was the condition Paul placed on their salvation? (v. 2)
3. What were the three “facts” of the Gospel that Paul said he had preached to them? (v. 3-4)
4. What was another name for Cephas? (v. 5)
5. How many people saw Christ alive at one time after His resurrection? (v. 6)
6. How many of those people who had seen Christ after His resurrection were still alive when Paul wrote this? (v. 6)
7. Who was the last person to see Christ alive after His resurrection? (v. 8)
8. Who did Paul say was the least of all the apostles? (v. 9)
9. Why did Paul say he was not worthy to be called an apostle? (v. 9)
10. Why did Paul say he was an apostle? (v. 10)
11. Why did Paul say God’s grace towards him was not in vain? (v. 10)
12. Even though it was Paul who was laboring, who was also laboring with Paul? (v. 11)
13. Since it was God laboring with anyone who preached, did it matter who preached the Gospel to them? (v. 11)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. **6** After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. **7** After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. **8** Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. **11** Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

NOTES: In this chapter Paul is discussing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He begins by summarizing the gospel into three basic facts: Jesus died, He was buried and He rose again on the third day. This does not mean that those three facts are all that really matters. Everything is based on those three facts, and if one does not believe and is fully committed to those things, one's salvation is not real. In order to give evidence for the resurrection (likely even many of Paul's readers were having a difficult time believing the resurrection of Jesus, just as many today have a difficult time believing the resurrection), Paul lists many of the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. This list is not exhaustive. We know that because the gospel accounts mention several women who saw Jesus alive, but he omitted all of them.

We also see the humility of Paul. Even though he was an apostle, he testified that he was not worthy to be an apostle, and that it was only by the grace of God that he was called to be one.

SOME ARE MISTAKEN, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES

Sunny David

When Jesus lived on earth, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were the two most popular religious sects among the Jews. They felt threatened by Christ's plain and truthful teaching. So, they often tried to embarrass Jesus by posing ensnaring questions to Him. They were always scheming how they might entangle Jesus in His talk. Therefore, they would often bring to Him very tricky and mischievous questions with such intentions. Jesus, however, refuted their arguments each time and reduced them to silence.

On one occasion when Jesus had silenced the Pharisees by giving a very fitting answer to their question, we read:

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman dies also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:23-32)

Thus, we observe that Jesus gave them a most scriptural and appropriate

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answer to their question. Had they known the Scripture doctrine of the resurrection, they would have known that it did not involve the continuance of marriage, and had they known the power of God, they could have known that He could raise the dead without those carnal propensities on which marriage is based. However, here I would like for you to notice what Jesus told them, before answering their question. He said, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”

People have often wondered why there are so many conflicting doctrines and faiths in Christianity today? Some have contended that it is just a matter of interpretation. Yet if so, it is sinful, because the Bible teaches that no prophecy or teaching of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:21). The real problem, however, lies in the fact that most people have never studied the Scriptures as they should be studied, and therefore, they have not learned to handle aright the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15). Most people want to understand a verse or a passage of the Scriptures through their denominational preconceived view or belief. Instead of searching the Scriptures themselves (John 5:39), they have often consulted commentaries and other such books written by uninspired men and “Bible scholars.” Hence, they believe things written in them as God’s truth.

Now, there is nothing wrong in consulting a commentary or a book, as long as one is not carried away by the thoughts and belief of the author, if they are not contained in the Scriptures. In most cases, though, people do not want to consult the Scriptures as much as they want to consult a commentary to understand certain teachings in the Bible. Instead of leaning on God’s book, they rely heavily on the books written by men. Moreover, people are overly impressed by the popularity and the educational background of the author and would rather accept them as the authority on Scripture. Thus, if the commentator or the “scholar” teaches error on some subject, then they uphold that error, not as error, but as truth. This is exactly what has happened in the last few hundred years, and we are reaping the consequences even now.

Uninspired men, so called scholars and founders of various denominational churches, years ago advocated the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, the doctrine of inherited sin, baptizing infants, sprinkling

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of water for baptism, using mechanical instruments in the worship of God and calling the Lord's Supper a sacrament. Instead of observing the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, as the Bible teaches, many observe it only once a month or only once or twice a year. Many people observe Christmas and Easter as holy days as well as adopt several other unscriptural teachings. Millions of people today around the world follow and uphold these teachings and doctrines of men, not knowing what the Scriptures teach about them—or that many of these tenets are not included in the Bible.

All denominational churches have different beliefs and convictions from each other. If not, they would be all together in one church and not be divided. They all believe in the Bible, but they also believe as much or more in their creed books, catechisms, confessions of faith, manuals and books of discipline. In fact, they are not divided on what the Bible teaches but on what men have taught in those different creed books. There is not a single **denominational church** on earth that follows the Bible only. If a church follows the Bible only, it cannot be a denomination.

We can all agree on what the Bible teaches, but we cannot all agree on what men teach, because men teach differently from each other as well as from the Bible. For example, we can all agree to be called Christians only, because the Bible teaches that in the beginning this is the name by which the followers of Christ were called (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), but we cannot all agree to be called Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans or Pentecostals, etc. Moreover, all denominational churches on earth today exist contrary to the will of God (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; John 17: 20-21). They err, not knowing the Scriptures. ✚

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a Hindi-speaking TV evangelist and an elder for the Lord's church.

David's Devotional: Any Excuse Will Do There was once a fox that was drinking from a stream. Then, he noticed just downstream from him a little lamb also drinking. He decided to have the lamb for supper, but he needed an excuse to seize him. "You are muddying up my drinking water!" accused the fox. "Not so," said the Lamb, "for I am downstream from you!" The Fox proceeded to eat the Lamb anyway! The witnesses said, "Any excuse will do for someone who has already made up his mind!" Let us be careful to do what is **right**, not just what we **want**!

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Leadership Lessons from Acts 6

Cecil May, Jr.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word," And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

Murmuring

"A complaint by the Hellenists arose." The KJV translates, *"there arose a murmuring."*

Murmuring is a serious sin (1 Corinthians 10:10), and Christians are warned not to engage in it (Philippians 2:14). **"Murmuring"** is not an acceptable way to communicate a



problem to the leadership. However, instead of condemning murmuring, the apostles listened and understood there was a genuine problem. Solv-

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ing problems, pacifying people and keeping peace were all deemed more important, so the apostles responded as if the problem had been called to their attention the right way.


Delegation

The apostles needed to continue giving their attention to prayer, preaching and teaching, but the daily distribution of food to the widows also needed to be handled equitably. Therefore, the latter task was delegated. Similarly, elders have important oversight and shepherding tasks. Delegation works when deacons understand their responsibilities, when elders trust their deacons and do not micro-manage, but when deacons are held accountable for doing their work well. As a business axiom correctly says, “You cannot expect what you do not inspect.”

Congregation Selects, Apostles Appoint

The biblical model for selecting leaders is seen here. *“Brothers pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”* Today, an eldership is often a self-perpetuating group. Present elders pick new elders. However, in this biblical model before us, qualifications were stated, and the congregation selected. The ones who appoint or ordain are not the ones who select. Some seem to follow the biblical examples they like and ignore others that they wish were a different way.

A Model of Concern for the Neglected

Grecian rather than Hebrew widows were being neglected. Of the seven men selected by the congregation, every name is Grecian. There is not a Saul, Samuel or Simeon among them. Those being neglected were the ones selected to correct the problem. 

[Editor’s Note: We are thankful to brother May for his insightful observations from Scripture regarding Christian leadership. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

The Commandments of Men

Brent Smith

If we love God, then keeping His commandments is not grievous (1 John 5:3). However, Jesus did say, “...*strait*” [or difficult] *is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matthew 7:14 KJV; cf., NKJV). Jesus also said that coming after

Him requires one to bear “*his cross*” (Matthew 16:24). Later in the New Testament, Paul’s words are encouraging. “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:18). Yet, make no mistake about it. Life is hard, and living the right kind of life is extremely difficult.

So, why make it harder on folks than God makes it. Why require more out of Christians than God requires in order to be deemed faithful? There have been religious individuals, under both the Old and New dispensations, who taught for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9). The Jewish leaders could make a good case for the various restrictions that they had added to keeping the Sabbath. Their judgment in many cases may have been very sound. When they bound those judgments, however, no matter how good their judgments were, they made it harder to go to Heaven than did God. Consequently, they became the transgressors.

All of us must be careful—no matter the biblical issue, no matter how strongly we feel about it, no matter how wise our judgment may be, if there is any room whatsoever in our interpretation, if any leniency is allowed whatsoever by Scripture, if any lack of clarity either because the Bible does not specify or our personal understanding is lacking—not to make a law where God did not make a law. **Why would we ever want to make it harder for anyone to go to Heaven than does God?** †



Brent Smith is the preacher for the church of Christ in Trenton, Tennessee, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The Principle of Expediency

Brian R. Kenyon

What is meant by the term “expediency”? The English definition of the term “expedient” is that which is “useful for effecting a desired result; suited to the circumstances or the occasion; advantageous; convenient” (*Webster’s Dictionary*, Third College Edition, 1986). There is also a negative sense in which the word is used, namely, the idea of getting gain for oneself regardless of what is right or just, but the basic meaning of the term is that which gives advantage. The English word “expedient” is found seven times in the *King James Version* of the Bible (John 11:50; 16:7; 18:14; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23; 2 Corinthians 8:10; 12:1). The Greek word *sumphero* (συνφέρω), from which “expedient” is translated, occurs in nine other places. It is translated “profit” (1 Corinthians 7:35; 10:33; 12:7; Hebrews 12:10), “profitable” (Matthew 5:29-30; Acts 20:20), “better” (Matthew 18:6), “is [not] good” (Matthew 19:10), and “brought... together” (Acts 19:19).

Expediencies Must First Be Lawful

Of particular interest are the references in First Corinthians: “**All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any**” (6:12) and “**All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not**” (10:23). “Expedient” (from *sumphero*, which can also be translated “helpful” (NKJV) or “profitable” (NAS) means “to help, confer a benefit, be advantageous or profitable or useful...something that is useful or helpful” (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*). It must be understood that no unlawful action can be done expediently (Romans 3:8). Additionally, merely because an action is lawful does not mean it is always expedient—all lawful actions do not necessarily edify (1 Corinthians 10:23; 8:1-13). The unlawful pursuit of a lawful thing constitutes bondage, and thus results in sin (1 Corinthians 6:12; Romans 6:16). All actions must have Bible authority (Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9-11). The Bible authorizes by its explicit statements, revealed examples and implication. These avenues of authority must be ascertained

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by “*handling aright the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15 ASV).

Applications of Expediency

In most authorized actions there are areas of expediency. For example, the Bible authorizes Christians to partake of the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week, and that they are to use unleavened bread and “*fruit of the vine*” (Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 20:7). However, the Bible gives no exclusive pattern as to what time on the first day of the week the Lord’s Supper must be served. Thus, the time of day during which the congregation partakes of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week is a matter of expediency. There is just as much authority for partaking of it at 9:30 a.m. as there is at 2:30 p.m.

Expediency is also involved in other God-authorized actions such as in what body of water one should be baptized (in a baptistry or in a natural body of water), singing (with songbooks or by memory), preaching the Gospel (in the pulpit, on television, radio or via the Internet). Where there is no exclusive pattern given for fulfilling a God-authorized obligation, and as long as the obligatory action is not altered or omitted, any expedient action (which is not inherently sinful) may be used. Remember, an “expedient” is that which gives advantage.

Conclusion

Not only is New Testament Christianity the only religion authorized and approved by God, it is the only religion that will work in any culture. One reason why it will work in every culture is because it has the built-in principle of expediency. That is, its requirements can be carried out in a number of different ways so long as the requirement itself does not change. As seen with the Lord’s Supper, one cup or many cups, before preaching or after preaching, whatever works best for a particular congregation, is fine. We should never let a matter of expediency split a local church, yet in many (perhaps even most) cases a disagreement over expedencies is exactly the cause. Let us work together and cooperate in building up and expanding the borders of God’s kingdom! 

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

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Death and Eternity

Royce Frederick

What happens when a person dies? On day six of creation, ***“...the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being”*** (Genesis 2:7). Death occurs when the ***“soul”*** or the ***“spirit”*** of a person leaves his body. ***“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it”*** (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When Rachel was dying, the Bible says, ***“her soul was departing”*** (Genesis 35:18). James tells us very simply that ***“the body without the spirit is dead”*** (James 2:26).

After death, every soul goes to the waiting place called ***“Hades.”*** It has two parts: (1) a place of comfort for those who are saved and (2) a place of suffering for those who are lost. The souls of righteous people go to the comfortable waiting place in Hades. Jesus told about a beggar named Lazarus who died ***“and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom”*** (Luke 16:22). He went to a place where he would enjoy close companionship with Abraham. Also, Luke 23:39-43 tells us about two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. After one of them repented, Jesus told him, ***“...today you will be with Me in Paradise”*** (Luke 23:43; see Acts 2:27, 31). The word ***“paradise”*** means “royal park” or “garden.” These verses show that the souls of righteous people go to a pleasant waiting place at death.

The souls of sinful people go to a miserable waiting place in Hades. In the account about Lazarus, Jesus said, ***“...The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom”*** (Luke 16:22-23). The rich man later said, ***“...I am tormented in this flame”*** (Luke 16:24). The rich man could not go from his place of misery to be with Abraham (Luke 16:26). Also, he was not permitted to send a message to his five brothers who were still alive on the earth (Luke 16:27-31).


All people will be raised from death and will stand before Christ to be judged. He said, ***“...the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice [the voice of Christ] and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done***

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). God has “... appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness...” (Acts 17:31). On that day, every person from every nation will stand before Christ to be judged (Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31-33; Revelation 20:11-15). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

When Christ judges everyone, He will say to the saved people, *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). On that day, all citizens of the kingdom will enter the eternal place of the kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Philippians 3:20; Acts 14:21-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 21:1-4). To the wicked He will say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). They “...will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). Speaking about that future time, John wrote, “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15).*

If we obey the Gospel and remain faithful, we don’t need to worry about death and eternity. By God’s grace, the blood of Jesus removes our sins when we are baptized, and His blood keeps on cleansing us as we walk with Him (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4, 23; 8:1; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9; Hebrews 3:12-14; 1 John 1:7). *“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).*

For all saved people, the Judgment Day will be a time of rejoicing! Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3)! *

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

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

"Who Is My Neighbor?"


John Kar

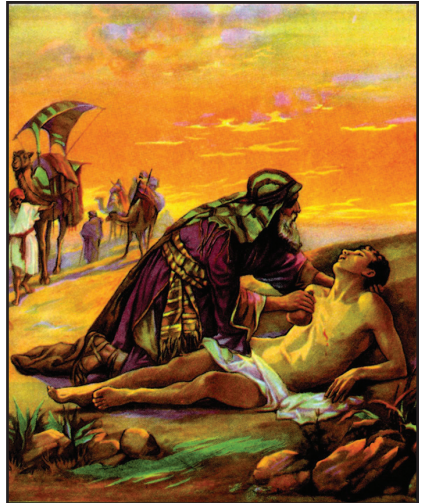
In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught us how to love our neighbors. A lawyer asked, ***"Who is my neighbor?"*** (Luke 10:29). However, Jesus chose to emphasize *being* a good neighbor instead. He wanted the lawyer to ask himself. "Am I a good neighbor?"

In Christ, we will journey as far as it takes to find people who are hurting and show them compassion. Like the Messiah, we should ***"bind up the brokenhearted."*** We should do whatever it takes to care for others. Christians make good neighbors!

Jesus asked the lawyer this vital question, ***"Which of these proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?"*** ***"The one who showed him mercy,"*** he responded. Jesus said, ***"You go, and do likewise."*** Jesus explained:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

No matter their race, nationality, or background we must view others as being made in the image of God and treat them in a neighborly way. In Christ we can do nothing less! 



John Kar, Jr. is the minister for the Church of Christ in Providence, Rhode Island, USA.

A CHOICE, A PATH AND A REWARD

Aaron Cozort

A CHOICE TO MAKE (JOSHUA 24:14-15)

Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua called upon people to make a choice—serve the Lord or don't; be faithful or not; return to the gods of Egypt or choose to serve the LORD. We all have a choice to make in our lives. We can serve the Lord or we can serve Satan. We can choose righteousness or we can select depravity. Psalms 106:3 reads, *"Blessed are those who keep justice, And he who does righteousness at all times!"* **Serving righteousness and making a choice to be righteous is not a one-time decision, but it is a path, a journey and a way of life that is chosen day after day.**

A PATH TO FOLLOW (PSALM 1:1A, 2, 6)

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Every day when we awake and face a new sunrise, we determine our path. Are we walking down Heaven's road or are we following a well-paved path to Hell? We can choose righteousness or we can choose the easy way. "Easy Street" is calling; the path of the simple is available, but no one makes the choice for us. We choose. We have the power of choice.


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God is watching as a hopeful father watches his child take his first steps, knowing he will not do it perfectly, but hoping he will keep getting back up and trying again. Every day, we need to continue steadfastly on a path of righteousness. Psalm 37:23 says, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.”*

A REWARD FOR ETERNITY (PSALM 37:18)

The LORD knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever.

An inheritance awaits the righteous—the eternal abode of those who know God and love His appearing. Jesus said eternal life is to know God and Christ His Son (John 17:3). There is a reward awaiting those who fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

As you make your choices, determine your path and seek your reward. May you always remember to walk according to the guidance of the Father, seek the counsel of the godly and chart your course by the light that shines from above. 

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

Robison's Rubies

Why do bad things happen to good people? I do not know, but I do know there is still a loving God. Some people deny God's existence because an all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing God, in their view, would not allow suffering. “If He loved and was all-powerful, then, He must not know about it,” they object. “If He loves and knows, He must not be powerful enough to stop it,” they cry. Further, “If He is powerful enough and knows about it, He must not love enough to stop it.” So, they say, “Since He cannot be all-loving, all-powerful, and all-knowing, He cannot exist.” There is, though, another possibility. Consider, please, that God has done something about suffering. He came and suffered with us in the person of His Son. Therein, He can identify with us and comfort us. That takes knowledge, power and love.

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Growing in Grace and Knowledge

Marilyn LaSrape

As we look back over this past year, and all the years of our Christian lives, how would we evaluate our spiritual growth in grace and knowledge? Has it occurred daily? Weekly? Monthly? Or any?

When we look at the life of the apostle Peter, we get a picture of his growth pattern. Peter's growth is striking when we note a few of the events of his life. In the early period of Peter's walk with our Lord, we read of him rebuking Jesus after He told them that the Romans, at the insistence of the Jewish leaders, would kill Him. Later, we read how impetuous Peter was when he cut off the ear of Malchus in defense of our Lord being arrested. When Peter cursed and swore, denying Jesus, we are appalled. Our hearts ache with Peter when our Lord turned and looked at him, after which he went out and wept bitterly. Yet, Peter stood boldly with the greatest clarity of conviction on the Day of Pentecost and delivered that first Gospel sermon, which culminated in three thousand souls being added to the Lord's church that day! Sometime later, Peter preached to Cornelius and his household, and they became the first Gentile converts to the faith. Peter made one more recorded misstep when he played the hypocrite with the Galatian brethren, at which time Paul withstood him to his face. By the time Peter had written his two letters, he was an elder in the Lord's church. Peter encouraged Christians with the utmost power and zeal to endure suffering as followers of Christ and warned them to beware of false teachers!

With his focus on false teachers, growth, grace and knowledge, Peter in his second letter spoke of their beloved brother Paul who wrote in all his epistles, some things hard to understand, which ***“untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures”*** (2 Peter 3:16). Verses 17-18 read, ***“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand,***

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beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

In the *Truth for Today Commentary: 1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, Duane Warden wrote about verse 18:

Peter’s closing words are a model of Christian admonition. Grow, he said. It is not the first time he has demanded that the Christian journey ascend on an upward climb. When the apostle presented his list of Christian virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-8, he called for growth... Among the qualities that Peter urged his readers to adopt was “knowledge”...The admonition to grow covers the **grace** as well as the **knowledge of our Lord**, but there is a subtle difference between the two. The Lord extends Grace. It is something to be received with thankfulness. Christ supplies grace; the Christian pursues knowledge...Apparently Peter meant this: The favor of Jesus Christ will be extended to believers as they live faithfully in Him... The Christian life can never be static. Like a living organism, one either grows or declines...Those who want to equate Christianity with occasional emotional experiences are most in danger of falling from steadfastness...There is no shortcut to faithfulness.

It takes time, a lot of time, to grow in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. The grace of God was demonstrated in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Heaven supplied the grace; the acquiring of knowledge is done on earth when we are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Hunger and thirst are our most urgent physical needs. Spiritually, when we are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, it means we want to be right, accepted and approved by God. It means we are expressing our need and desire for a deeper, more meaningful and lasting relationship with God. It means there is complete peace of mind for us when we know all is right with God.


The *Gospel Advocate*, October 2019 issue, features the article, “The Church and the Hurting,” by Timothy Matheny. One of his subheadings is, “Everybody has an adequate tool for helping the hurting if they will use

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it.” He wrote:

We live in a world of specialists and certifications, for good reason; I have no business trying to be a heart surgeon because I have not engaged in the rigorous scientific study and proven my ability to do so. But to think we cannot be expert handlers of the Word of God is an admission that we have not engaged in rigorous study and proven our abilities to do so. The writer of Hebrews, guided by the Holy Spirit, condemned such a lack of expertise and action in his readers as a failure to follow the natural course of growth (Hebrews 5:11-14). There is no implication in that passage, or in the rest of Hebrews, that this growth is somehow only intended for an expert subset of Christians.

My attention was immediately drawn to his statements about following the “natural course of growth” and the implication that this growth was not “only intended for an expert subset of Christians.” That just brings it down to where the rubber meets the road! God’s expectation of His sons and daughters is continual growth and knowledge until they close their eyes in death.

So how are we doing? Are we growing? Is this growth evident as others observe our lives? Do we understand that God has supplied the grace, but there is no such thing as **having arrived** (Philippians 3:12) as a Christian in biblical knowledge? Is the Bible and good books about the Bible still our favorite reading? Only God and we as individuals know for sure. *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely”* (Revelation 22:17). 

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

KENNEY’S PENNIES *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21 NKJV). This verse probably makes little sense to those who fail to take into account the resurrection. You need to take that into account! There will be an accounting! Great victory to share in for you too!



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Be Anxious in Nothing

Wayne Barrier

Everyday life is never free from situations, conditions and circumstances that tend to cause anxiety and tension. We deal with issues ranging from personal health and economic security all the way to national security and global insecurity. How should a Christian handle all of the turmoil, trials, tribulation and uncertainty? Four things come to mind based on biblical teaching.



First, we should learn to count our blessings. Even in the hardest of times, we can identify ways we are blessed. We may have financial problems, but enjoy good health, freedom and the friendship and love of countless others. We enjoy *“all spiritual blessings”* in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Second, we should pray. Paul’s instructions in Philippians 4:4-7 are as follows. *“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with*

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thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Matthew 7:7-10 states, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For which one of you, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a serpent?”* Pray for wisdom (James 1:5), inner strength (Ephesians 3:14-16), daily needs, forgiveness, guidance and deliverance from evil (Matthew 6:9-12). Pray for the sick, disabled, handicapped and helpless.

Third, remember that God’s love for His children is greater than any force man can face. Romans 8:28-39 teaches that God is in control and is looking out for us. All things come together for good for those that love the Lord. *“If God is for us, who can be against us?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”*

Finally, do something for someone else. James 2:14-15, 17 state, *“What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”* Help the sick, lonely, handicapped and helpless. Act with careful thought and wisdom. Try to change things for good.

We can never escape the trials and troubles of everyday life. We can either allow them to disable and destroy us, or we can approach them from a biblical perspective and overcome their impacts. **Positive, faith-filled servants of God are needed to counter the negative consequences of evil in the world. Choose to be a force for good!** ✝

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

What if Jesus came to our church? What if Jesus came into our next assembly? Where would He sit? What would He say? What would He do? What would you say? What would you wear? How would you act? How would you worship? That will never happen, you think. Jesus is in the midst of Christian assemblies (Hebrews 2:11-12). He has already been here! The question is, “How will you act the next time you’re in worship with Jesus by your side?”

How Do You Measure Up?

My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;
For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.

Let not mercy and truth forsake you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart,
And so find favor and high esteem
In the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

It will be health to your flesh,
And strength to your bones.

Honor the Lord with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits
of all your increase;

So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine.

My son, do not despise
the chastening of the Lord,
Nor detest His correction;
For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son
in whom he delights.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Be Afraid. Be Very Afraid

Denny Petrillo

I don't remember from where that line came—"Be afraid. Be very afraid," but I do remember this. It was said to someone who was blissfully unaware of the terrible danger that lurked ahead.

Solomon, in Proverbs 1:7, penned that we should "*fear God*." This is a powerful word and is the word that is *phobos* in Greek (which then becomes "phobia" in English). While some think the word means "respect," it actually is a lot more than this. There are other words in Hebrew that convey the idea of respect.

Actually, the word means "fright, to be terrified, to be afraid." In Exodus 20 when the Israelites were surrounding Mt. Sinai, God showed His awesome presence through thunder, lightning, earthquakes and a powerful voice. It scared the Israelites greatly, which is exactly what God wanted to happen. He said He did this on purpose—to teach them to fear so that they might obey.

Jesus equally taught that we should not fear man but most certainly should fear God (Matthew 10:28). He said that we should fear God because of the power He possesses over our lives **and** our souls. Literally, no one else has that power.

So, what does God hope to accomplish by getting us to fear Him? Why did Solomon say this is the "beginning" of knowledge? If we don't fear the teacher, we'll not fear His teachings. There is a great day of Judgment coming. It is a "*terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Hebrews 10:31). If we disregarded His teachings, because we did not fear the teacher, we will find ourselves facing an angry God (Romans 2:6).

The "beginning," then, is to fear God. Recognize He is great and that you are not. Recognize that He has all knowledge and you don't. Sit at His feet and learn from Him. That is clearly the best starting point for everyone.✝

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

WORSHIP

Worshipping the Lord in Song

Ronald D. Reeves

Christians have been commanded to take an active part in congregational worship in song (Ephesians 5:19). I trust we know that singing is truly a morally upright spiritual activity (Psalm 92:1). In the Old Testament, those who were encouraged to sing included the saints (Psalm 30:4) and the righteous (Psalm 33:1-2). On various occasions, the record indicates that all of the children of Israel sang, including Moses (Exodus 15:1), the Levites (2 Chronicles 29:30), King David (2 Samuel 22:1), Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:1), and the singers of Israel (2 Chronicles 29:28). In the New Testament, members of the church are commanded to sing in worship (1 Corinthians 14:15, 26), including every member (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). This is supported by the example of Jesus singing with His disciples (Matthew 26:26-30) and by the example of Paul and Silas singing in prison (Acts 16:23-25).

Both in the Old and New testaments, the record indicates that righteous men and women should direct their worship in song unto the Lord (Psalm 7:1; Ephesians 5:19) and unto one another (1 Samuel 21:11; Ephesians 5:19). Such stirring spiritual activity should be engaged in the assembly of the church (1 Corinthians 14:15, 26; Hebrews 2:12) and even at unexpected times of duress (Acts 16:23-25).

The biblical portrait of the character of our singing is manifestly clear. We should sing with the whole heart (Psalm 9:1), with understanding (Psalm 47:6-7), with reverence (2 Chronicles 29:30), with gladness (Psalm 9:1-2) and with joy (Psalm 6:1). The New Testament, in addition, directs that we worship in song in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24), employing spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19) as we sing praise unto the Lord (Acts 16:25), singing with the spirit and the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15), with grace in our hearts (Colossians 3:16), as we teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).

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Should singing be a spiritual activity relegated to second-class status? The above biblical commentary suggests not. May we, as the psalmist, sing *“as long as I live”* (Psalm 104:33), even *“forever”* (Psalm 61:8). Long before Ephesians 5:19 was penned, righteous persons were motivated to joyfully engage in spiritual singing as a response to the contexts of life. We note some of them from the Old Testament record.



Jews of past generations were motivated to sing because of things intimately related to the Lord, such as the position of the Lord as the King of all the earth (Psalm 47:6-7) or the character of the Lord, whether it be His righteousness (Psalm 7:17), His faithfulness (Psalm 89:1), His holiness (Psalm 30:4) or His honorable status (Psalm 6:1-2). Their past activity in song was also motivated by their perception of the power of the Lord as it was exercised (Psalm 21:13) and also by the consequences of such power (Psalm 9:1). The Word of the Lord also motivated them to sing. As they had personal faith in His Word, they responded in song (Psalm 106:12), especially when His Word prophesied victory over their enemies (2 Chronicles 20:21-22). Jews of past

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generations were also motivated to sing because of activity in association with the Temple, such as the laying of the Temple's foundation (Ezra 3:10-11) or the sanctifying of the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 29:1-28).

They especially were motivated to express themselves in song as they came to better realize the potential and actual working of the Lord in their personal lives. They broke out in song as they sought help from the Lord to protect them from enemies (Psalm 7:1) and to express their dependence upon the Lord (Psalm 57:6-7). They broke out in song as they received blessings from the Lord, whether such were manifold (Psalm 18:48-49) or bountiful (Psalm 13:6). More specifically, they broke out in song when they were blessed with needed water (Numbers 21:16-17), and when they were delivered from the Egyptians (Exodus 15:1, 21) and from the Canaanites (Judges 4). Yet, their song service was not limited to such matters. They were motivated unto their service in song because of their redemption (Psalm 71:22-23), their deliverance from sin (Psalm 51:14), their salvation (Psalm 95:1), divine mercy (Psalm 59:16-17) and the righteous judgment of the Lord (Psalm 67:4). Having been blessed in like manner, let every child of God sing personally, qualitatively, with positive impact upon others, with a historical perspective, to the Lord and to one another, throughout life and with godly motivation. The grace of God demands no less (Ephesians 2:8).✝

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



“Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (2 Samuel 7:22 NKJV).

The words are those of King David. We have been blessed with more written revelation in our day than was available in prior biblical periods. If David could make such an assessment in his day, then should our attitude toward God be any less in our day?

WORSHIP

Teach Us to Pray

David Conley

Matthew 6:9-13

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| • <i>“Hallowed by thy name”</i> | <i>Worship</i> |
| • <i>“Thy will be done”</i> | <i>God’s Will</i> |
| • <i>“Give us this day our daily bread”</i> | <i>Necessities</i> |
| • <i>“Forgive us our sins”</i> | <i>Forgiveness</i> |
| • <i>“Lead us not into temptation”</i> | <i>Spiritual Help</i> |
| • <i>“Thine is the Kingdom”</i> | <i>Worship (again)</i> |

One of the reasons people give for not praying as they should is that they “*can’t think of anything about which to pray.*” These are some things that Jesus taught His disciples for which to pray, and we **still** need to include these things in our prayers! The next time you pray, use these things for your **model**, and you will have more for which to pray than you have time to pray! ✝

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



PROVERBS 17:22



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.



Him: “This article says women use about 30,000 words a day, whereas men only use 15,000 words.”

Her: “That’s probably because a woman has to say everything twice.”

Him: “...What?”



The teacher in Little Johnny’s class approached him and directed he go to the principal’s office. When he got there, the principal 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!**”



After ordering a milkshake, a man had to leave his seat in the restaurant to use the restroom. Since he didn’t want anyone to take his shake, he took a paper napkin, wrote on it, “The world’s strongest weight lifter,” and left it under his glass.

When he returned from making his call, the glass was empty. Under it was a new napkin with a note that said “Thanks for the treat!” It was signed, “The world’s fastest runner.”



A good piece of chocolate has about 200 calories. As I enjoy two servings per night and a few more on weekends, I consume 3,500 calories of chocolate in a week, which equals to one pound of weight per week.

Therefore, in the last three and a half years, I have had a chocolate caloric intake of about 180 pounds. I only weigh 165 pounds, so without chocolate, I would have wasted away to nothing about three months ago.

I owe my life to chocolate!

PROVERBS 17:22



Moses was walking down the street when he bumped into the ex-President George W. Bush.

“Hello,” Bush said. “Nice weather we’re having, huh?”

Moses took one look at the President, turned and ran in the other direction. The next day Moses was walking down the same street and there was Bush. Again he tried to initiate a conversation. Again Moses turned and ran away.

Bush was tired of this bizarre treatment, so the next time Moses ran away from him, Bush followed. When he caught up, he asked Moses what was wrong.

Moses said, “The last time I talked to a bush I spent 40 years in the desert.”



We brought our newborn son, Adam, to the pediatrician for his first checkup. As he finished, the doctor told us, “You have a cute baby.”

Smiling, I said, “I bet you say that to all new parents.”

“No,” he replied, “just to those whose babies really are good looking.”

“So what do you say to the others?” I asked.

“He looks just like you.”



Sunday School Teacher: “Now Little Johnny, I want you to memorize today’s motto, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Little Johnny: “Yes m’am, but I know it already. My father says he has always used that as his motto in his business.”

Teacher: “Oh, how noble of him! And what is his business?”

Little Johnny: “He’s a boxer.”



Policeman: What are you looking for, Mister, did you lose something?

Man: Yes, I lost my watch.

Policeman: Where did you lose it?

Man: On Tenth Street.

Policeman: This is Twelfth Street.

Man: I know, but when I dropped it, it was still running.



I’m great at multi-tasking. I can waste time, be unproductive and procrastinate all at once.

Are You a Faithful Christian Example?

Mark N. Posey

One's example is powerful! We learn, listen and live by example. People copy what they see others doing. Notice two illustrations. In the 1934 film, *It Happened One Night*, Clark Gable removed his shirt and he wasn't wearing an undershirt! Every man wore an undershirt! It is said that the sale of undershirts in the United States dropped by 75% as a result. People copy.

The makers of the 1982 film *E.T.* approached the confectionary maker Mars about having M&Ms used in the film. Mars, for some reason, said "No." So, the film makers went to Hershey's. The result was that E.T. ate Hershey's Reese's Pieces, which were relatively unknown at the time, but sales went through the roof. People copy.

Notice Great Bible examples: Abraham had great faith (Romans 4:20), Joseph was great in forgiving (Genesis 50:20), Moses was a great leader (Exodus 14), David was great at courage (1 Samuel 17) and Jesus is our perfect example (2 Corinthians 5:21). Notice seven habits of highly effective Christians from 1 Timothy 4:12-16.

1. **Model Christian Morality** (v. 12). Our words, conduct, love, spirit, faith and purity must be demonstrated in our thoughts, words and deeds. The greatest message we will ever preach is the one we preach with our lives (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9).
2. **Biblical Foundation** (v. 13). "*Devote yourself*" (verb) is *proseko*; it is present active indicative, which means to be continually devoted to the Word.
3. **Using God-given Ability** (v. 14). Timothy had received miraculous

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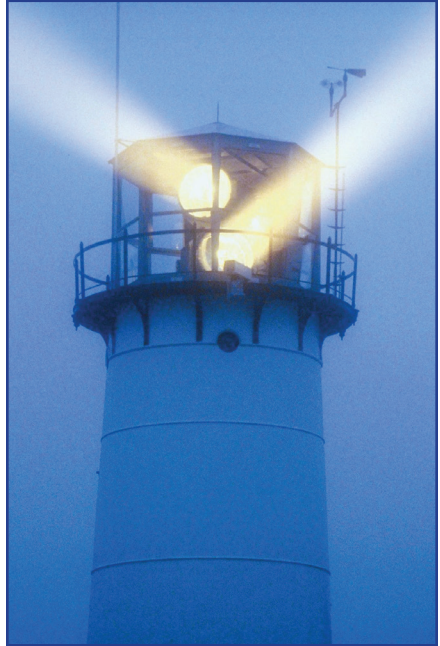
powers by the *“laying on of hands.”* The miraculous age ceased at the end of the first century (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Thus, it is by application we learn to use our God-given abilities. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25) stresses using what God gives us and not squandering it. What God has given, let us use to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31)!

4. Purpose Driven Life (v. 15a).

We must be entirely committed to holy living. Our purpose will determine our direction and outcome. Paul was clear about his purpose by saying, *“For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21; Galatians 2:20).

5. Let Your Light Shine (v. 15b).

Christianity is not a passive mistake but a committed determination. Christians must stand strong, shine brightly and live faithfully. Our lives must be sterling examples of holiness for others to see and copy (1 Peter 1:13-16).



6. Dedicated Perseverance (v. 16a). We must exercise endurance by examining the two great areas of life: self and Scripture. Thus, we will be powerful examples as we are seen to endure (Hebrews 10:32-37)!

7. Clear Goal (v. 16b). Salvation is our greatest need! As we examine ourselves, endure and think eternally, our focus will be right.

Thomas Jefferson, in writing to John Adams once said, “As Christians, we must realize the world is judging Christianity by us!”



Mark N. Posey is the preacher for the church of Christ in Winfield, Alabama, USA.

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Gossip

Emily Fisher

Why do we as humans feel the need to always be speaking about something new or interesting and have itching ears that long to hear some alluring piece of information? Maybe that is a question for psychology, but it certainly plays a part in our spiritual walk on this earth as God's people. One cannot go through a checkout aisle without seeing the gossip magazines the media produces. Maybe as Christians, we are not concerned with that type of gossip as much as the everyday hearsay of a coworker, neighbor or a fellow Christian. Many times, we can get caught up in what others are saying about someone or a particular situation involving another, and even if we do not have all the facts, we feel compelled to give our "two cents" worth. How often do we stop before we speak to think: "Will this help or hinder?" "If the person in question were here, would I say this to his face?" "Am I trying to be sincerely helpful or unfairly judgmental?" In other words, before we join in a conversation about another person who is not present, we need first to examine our own motives. How we use our tongues every day reflects upon the church of which we are a part and the God whom we serve.


The *Dictionary of Bible Themes* defines gossip as, "Idle talk, which foolishly or maliciously spreads rumors or facts" ("5000-HUMANITY"). *Webster's Dictionary* explains it as "information about the behavior and personal lives of other people." Gossip is anything spoken about another person that is false or is true, but it portrays him or her in a bad light, or it is something he or she would not want to be common knowledge.

That brings up some areas of concern. If a person is publicly sinning and we are aware of it, should we keep quiet because we do not want to gossip about them? In that situation we should first speak with that person alone and try to get him or her to turn back to God, and then, if he or she does not repent, we follow the Scriptures and inform the church (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3). When people are openly and impenitently sinning, the Bible tells us to note them so others will not be

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led astray (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). This is not gossip because we would be obeying God's Word and wanting the best for that person (their repentance). Gossip takes place when we want to destroy someone's character or reputation (no matter how small of a matter it may be) either with falsehoods or truths.

God's Word is not silent on how our Maker expects us to use our speech. In both the Old and New testaments, there are examples of gossip (Psalm 41:5-8; John 7:12-13; 3 John 1:9-10), and it is condemned throughout the Bible (Leviticus 19:16; Exodus 23:1; Psalm 101:5; Romans 1:29-30; 2 Corinthians 12:20). The inspired writers of the wisdom books often include the prudence of keeping one's tongue in check (Proverbs 10:18-19, 18:6-7; 21:23; 29:11; Ecclesiastes 5:2-3). Christians are to follow the example of the Lord, and He never falsely accused anyone or spent His time spreading rumors. Christ told His disciples that one day everyone will give an account for every word uttered (Matthew 12:36-37). This, indeed, is sobering and should motivate us to be all the more diligent in how we use our tongues. If we think that we can say anything that comes to mind, we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:26). Christians are commanded to have ***"speech that is always with grace"*** (Colossians 4:6) and ***"sound speech"*** (Titus 2:8) so that no one can accuse Christ's followers of evil. This leaves no room for gossip in the Christian's life. See also 1 Timothy 5:13, Titus 2:3 and 1 Peter 4:15.

God has blessed each of us with means to communicate, and how we do that is of our own free will. It ought not to be the case that we speak forth ***"blessings and cursings"*** or ***"bless our God"*** only to turn around and ***"curse men"*** (James 3:1-12). As Christians, we must make a conscious effort to check our thoughts before they cross our lips. If we do not, the results can be disastrous (Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 25:9-10; 26:20). Our purpose on this earth is to serve God and to help as many as we can in our short stay here to do the same. In order to fulfill this, we must think on things that are true and virtuous (Philippians 4:8) and open our mouths with wisdom and kindness (Proverbs 31:26). Gossip is not to be found among the characteristics of a Christian. May each of us pray for strength to ***"set a guard over our mouths"*** and ***"keep watch over the door of our lips"*** (Psalm 141:3). 

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

Have No Fear

Tam Raynor


Everyone has enemies. Sometimes an enemy may be just one really bad person, like a Goliath. Or, enemies may be a group wanting to cause or watch our utter annihilation. Some want to ruin our characters, jobs or minds. These enemies are of Satan (1 John 2:9-12), and God constantly says not to fear any human or anything in nature, regardless of how powerful and dangerous. Some of our enemies include the following.

Humans: Hateful, rotten ones. Moses' last words to God's people included, *"When you go out... against your enemies, and see horses... chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the Lord... is with you"* (Deuteronomy 20:1).

Satan: The Adversary, a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is powerful, but God says that his fate is sealed already (Revelation 12:9). So, what is there to fear?

Sin: We must attack sin with all our strength, not fearing to conquer what keeps us from being special in God's eyes.

Death, Pain and Shame: Jesus destroyed the power of shame and pain by dying on the cross, as well as the power of death by His resurrection. God said, *"...do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28).

God taught the Israelites how to fight (Deuteronomy 20:1). Today, He expects us to fight against our enemies, using His armor (Ephesians 6:10-18). God says we are to unite and work *"side by side for the faith of the gospel... not frightened in anything by [our] opponents"* (Philippians 1:27-28). Let's decide to be like the warriors to whom Moses talked (Deuteronomy 31:8). We can *"...confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'"* (Hebrews 13:6). 

Tam Raynor is a preacher's wife, and she worships and labors alongside of her husband with the Hanoverton Church of Christ in Hanoverton, Ohio, USA.

Ready, Set, Grow!

Martha Lynn Rushmore

I am going to ask you a few questions that only you and I can answer for ourselves. Have you thought about putting Christ on in baptism so you can be a child of God? If not, why not? Have you been baptized for the remission of sins in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38)? Are you a babe in Christ? Have you been a Christian long enough to be off the milk of the Word and on the meat of the Word? Are you willing to work for the Lord and His church? Can you help the church to grow spiritually and numerically? If, so, then, **ready, set, grow!**



In order to become a child of God, one must hear the Gospel. ***“So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”*** (Romans 10:17 NKJV). Secondly, you must believe the Word of God. In Mark 16:16, we are told to believe and be baptized. Then, in Luke 13:3, 5, it says we must repent of our sins or we shall perish. What does the word repent mean? To repent,

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one changes his actions and not just his mind. Repentance is sometimes called a U-turn. Marshall Keeble, one of the great old-time preachers, compared repentance to a train backing up. It was going forward into sin. It then began to back up out of sin. Next, we are to confess Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10). Lastly, we are to put Christ on in baptism. In Romans 6:3-6, our baptism is compared to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We are to die to our sins and to be resurrected to a new life. Being a Christian does not end with these five steps, as we call them. This is just the beginning of one's new life. In Revelation 2:10, it says we are to remain faithful unto death—even to the giving of our lives for Christ.

We need to study as stated in 2 Timothy 2:15. This is one of the best ways to grow as a babe in Christ. We can read and study alone. We can also have someone from the congregation study with us. We also need to attend worship services **and** Bible classes. We need to pray daily to our Father in Heaven through Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). Keep company with other Christians; they will help us become stronger Christians. These are some ways we can grow to be strong children of the King and take the message to those who do not know the Savior.

The first teaching field is the home. It is our responsibility to teach our children and our husbands if they are not Christians. We teach by our actions, our attitude, our words and how we speak to them. Our voices and our actions say more sometimes than what we verbalize. Let them see you studying and reading the Word of God.

Take a special quiet time each day and study the Bible with your children. When they are young, they love hearing Bible stories. Also, before going to bed at night, when you tuck them into bed, be sure to say a prayer with them. They will learn, and as they get older, this will become automatic with them. Before each meal, give God thanks for your meal. It may not be what you wanted, but it was something to eat. Some in this world would love to have it because they have nothing.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians that they should have been partaking of the meat of the Word and teaching others. Instead, they were having to be taught as babes the milk of the Word themselves. ***“And I, brethren, could***

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not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2). We do not want to be like the Corinthians, and neither do we want to be like the Hebrew Christians to whom the following was penned.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Herein we want to observe that Christian women also have a responsibility to mature spiritually. As Christians, we are part of “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...*” (1 Peter 2:9-10). In addition to biblical instruction for all Christians, sisters in Christ have their own set of divine directives.

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. (1 Peter 3:1-6)

There is more, too. In Titus and Timothy, there are qualifications for elders and deacons. Ladies, we can disqualify our husbands from ever

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being able to serve the Lord in either of these offices. “How?” you say. Let us look at the qualifications for these works.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are the qualifications for the office of an elder. Read the passage. Then, turn to Titus 1:4-9 and read this passage, comparing it to the one in 1 Timothy. The qualifications are:

- **Desire** the office of an elder is a good work. The words to consider are “*desires*” and “*good work*” (1 Timothy 3:1). He must want to be a bishop, an elder, a shepherd or an overseer. The word “*desire*” is to **want something**.
- He must be “*blameless*”—guiltless, innocent, righteous, unblemished.
- An elder is to be “*the husband of one wife*.” He can have only one wife at a time. If his first wife dies and he marries again, he is still the husband of one wife.
- A man must be “*temperate*”—to have a mild manner, not quick to lose his temper, self-controlled, moderate.
- A prospective elder needs to be “*sober-minded*”—solemn, serious when needed. This does not mean he has to go around with a frown on his face, looking like he was weaned on a dill pickle.
- He must exhibit “*good behavior*.” His actions and conduct must be good.
- An elder is “*hospitable*”—to be friendly, sociable, warm, cordial and welcoming.
- He is “*able to teach*”—capable of teaching the Word and able to be in front of the church.
- An elder is “*not given to wine*”—in control. The use of any amount of alcohol inhibits the control of one’s senses (1 Timothy 3:2).
- He is “*not violent*”—not wanting to argue and fight.
- An elder is “*not greedy for money*”—trying to get money in unholy ways, such as gambling, missing services simply to work to gain more pay.
- He is “*gentle*”—patient, kind.
- An elder is “*not quarrelsome*”—not a brawler, not wanting to engage in altercations.
- He is “*not covetous*”—not trying to get things that belong to someone else.
- An elder “*rules his own house well*.” If he cannot rule his own home

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well, it is a sure thing he cannot oversee a congregation properly.

- He must have ***“his children in submission with all reverence.”*** His children must be obedient and respectful to their parents and those in authority.
- An elder is ***“not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he falls into the same condemnation as the devil.”*** He must be older and know the members of the congregation over whom he is to rule.
- A prospective elder must have ***“a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snares of the devil.”*** Those of the world must think he is a good man, honest and caring. His example must be as clean as possible.

Yes, these are qualifications for an older man to become an elder. A young man can do things that can keep him from ever qualifying to be an elder when he is older. Yes, young ladies, you can do the same to disqualify your husband.

Ladies, we need to set a goal of someday being the wife of an elder, a deacon or a preacher. I realize, we will not all marry one of these men, but it is a good goal for which to strive. As a young Christian lady, I urge you to set your goals high. Marry a strong Christian young man. If you are both striving to be the best Christians you can be, you will be helping each other to get to the final reward, Heaven.

We need to grow daily and diligently in our service for our Lord no matter our age, whether single, married or widowed. We should want to be the best Christian lady we can possibly be for our God. We all should grow in the fruit of the spirit as found in Galatians 5:22-23, ***“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*** We are told to in 2 Peter 1:5-8 to add to our faith: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. As you notice, some of these qualities are quoted in both Scriptures. They must be important for God to have mentioned them more than one time in His Word.

Ladies, let's grow together and be the very best example for others to see. Glory be to God for our growth and goodness. 

Martha Lynn Rushmore is a Staff Writer for The Voice of Truth International and Gospel Gazette Online. She and her husband teach extensively stateside and abroad. They reside in Ocala, Florida, USA.

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Whatever Happened To Family?

J.J. Turner

Some of us remember these statements: “The family that prays together stays together.” “The family is the backbone of the nation.” “The community is a reflection of the families who live in it.”

When you hear the word **family**, what comes to mind? Sadly, when some hear “family,” it causes painful memories; others are filled with happy memories. From the first family—Adam and Eve—until the most recent one, families have faced challenges. Some have grown stronger and closer together while others have deteriorated.

“There is no such thing as society: there are individual men and women, and there are families” (Margaret Thatcher). If society is composed of families, it follows that if there is something wrong with society there must be something wrong with families. What do you think?

In recent years there has been a proliferation of TV reality shows depicting various constructs of families, from “Housewives” to the Duggars, Duck Dynasty, etc. All of these have had an effect on families. The bubble burst relative to the “perfect family” image of the Duggars when a son committed adultery.

Social science studies, as well as government surveys, and common sense observations have clearly documented the breakdown of the 21st century family. Houses, instead of being homes, have become no more than motels where mom, dad and all the kids gather in their own mental space to spend time on their social media gadgets. I heard recently that the “average family” in the USA shares one common meal a month around the dinner table. Houses are now being built without formal dining rooms. The rise of fast food locations is another evidence of how families are being fed. Some wives and mothers brag about the fact that they no longer cook at home.

It is obvious that the once traditional American family has been replaced by what social historians refer to as “the nuclear family.” Marriages once involved couples who grew up in the same community and knew each other; their marriages expressed the same values as the community in which

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they were reared. Today, this is no longer true. Marriages are engaged in by couples who met online, in a bar, on vacation, at work, etc. The issues of ethnicity, culture, values, education, geography and more have to be negotiated, in most cases, with great effort by each partner in the marriage.

Perhaps this challenge is one of the reasons the divorce rate is 50 percent in our nation. When the issue of same sex marriage becomes part of the mix, the challenges facing the traditional family and society explode.

Whatever Happened to Family?

The family structure that once was a haven of love, a training center, a safe place, a sanctuary of spiritual practices and a place dedicated to the welfare of each member is dying a slow death. In some homes, it has died, as each family member is doing his or her own thing. Values that were once taught and practiced in the family and showed up in the workplace, school, neighborhood and in churches have gone the way of the rotary telephone.

Families in neighborhoods where they once knew each other and talked over the backyard fence have been replaced by families locked behind walls with alarms, fences, guard dogs and garages where cars speed in and out. **Many neighborhoods have become islands of isolated strangers.** Neighbors peep through their windows to spy on their neighbors.

Think about this. The family is where we all start our journey in life. From the training and examples to which we have been exposed, we were prepared to go out into the world with a negative or a positive attitude. The home formed our basic values, beliefs, fears, prejudices and habits in life. Abraham Lincoln said, "I am what I am because of my dear mother."

10 Factors Impacting Families

In my personal opinion, based on research and 50-years of ministry, there are 10 major factors, with numerous subsets, impacting today's families.

- Changing roles due to economic forces that require both husband and wife to enter the work force; mothers and wives compete with their husbands.
- Resentment of roles family members are being forced to accept: everyone having to work, responsibilities, etc. It's the "It's not my job" attitude.
- A loss of direction because of no clear agreed upon family values,

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rules and ethics.

- The influence of the media and the saturation of modernism.
- Deterioration of balanced education programs; ignorance of US Constitution, etc.
- Declining influences of churches as many are no more than marketing efforts to be the biggest gathering in a community. The Gospel is not preached as in the past, clearly stating Christian life guidance.
- The worship of sports and other recreation or leisure activities.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Increase of crime, violence, terrorism, gangs, corruption, etc.
- God is left out of plans and decisions.

Whatever Happened to Family?

It's an irony that many churches that claim they are "a family" are composed of members who aren't really practicing family in their physical homes. Which comes first? Does a family learn how to be "a family" at home and then take it to the congregation? Or, does a family learn how to be a family in a congregational setting and then take it to the home? Which comes first?

Regardless of the answers, we question, "**Whatever happened to family?**" There is no doubt there are many reasons that the concept of family has changed. However, we always go back to the first family: Adam and Eve. The deterioration of their family unit, which later involved one son killing his brother, started with Eve obeying the voice of Satan, followed by Adam's disobedience (Genesis 1-3). The word "sin," especially in the Greek language, means "to miss the mark, target, etc." God has a "target" for the family. It is to glorify Him (Ephesians 3:21).

God gave Israel a commandment that required a set of behaviors in the home as well as in daily life. Notice Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today, shall be in your HEART. You shall TEACH them diligently to your children, and shall TALK of them when you


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sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall BIND them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall WRITE them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

From these core behaviors, all values were to emerge in the daily life of an Israelite and his worship of God. This serves as a biblical, positive and workable model for families today.

It is easy to cry wolf and talk about the symptoms of the declining family, but *there is a need to offer some biblical, positive and workable solutions.* Here are a few.

- Families need fathers and heads of families to take a stand like Joshua did: “...*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15). You are not responsible for *my* family, and I am not responsible for *yours*. The government and church are not responsible for my family. **Fathers take a stand!**
- Families need mothers who love their husbands and children: “...*the older women...admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed*” (Titus 2:1-5).
- Families need children who will respect and obey their parents. “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment of promise*” (Ephesians 5:1-3).
- Families need fathers who will train and educate their children. “*And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4).

How are things with your family? What is your intentional plan to make sure your family is being taught, led and encouraged to be what God desires? 

J.J. Turner is an elder and the preacher for the McDonough Church of Christ in McDonough, Georgia, USA.

Holy Children

T. Pierce Brown

There is an interesting expression in 1 Corinthians 7:14 that may need clarification. It says, *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy”* (ASV). The most basic thing we need to know is the meaning of *“sanctified.”* It



simply means, “set apart.” It does not mean sinless or saved. The vessels of the tabernacle that were set apart for God’s use were holy or sanctified. The saints (Christians) at Corinth had been called and set apart for God’s use, but they committed many sins.

What is meant by the statement that the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife? It is not “by the wife” as if she were the agent by whom the sanctification took place, but *“in the wife”* because it is the marriage relationship of which he speaks. It is noteworthy that the words *“sanctified”* are perfect tense. That denotes the present state that results from a past action. Apparently, the past action to which he refers was the sanctification that took place when the couple married and still is in effect. He is simply saying that the wife who has an unbelieving husband does not

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need to put him away as she would if the relationship itself were wrong or unholy. Although he is an unbeliever, the marriage bond was and is still sacred, so the unbeliever is set apart in a sanctified relationship. **In this context, it has nothing whatever to do with salvation from sin.**

Paul went on to say that if that were not true and they were simply living together in an unholy relationship, any children they might have would be considered unclean. Stated another way, if they were not really husband and wife, their children would be illegitimate. When he uses the word *“unclean,”* he does not mean that the child is a sinner. In the Old Testament, a person who touched the carcass of a hog or a camel would be unclean until the evening (Leviticus 11:24). Even a woman who bore a child would be unclean for seven days (Leviticus 12:2).

So, a child born of an unholy union does not reflect on the child’s relationship to God at all, nor should it cause us to castigate or make unkind remarks about the child. Therefore, Paul simply means that **God recognizes and approves of the marriage relationship, even if one of the persons is an unbeliever**, for if he did not, he would not approve of a child being born in that relationship. Yet, since the relationship is sacred or sanctified, the child born in such a relationship is legitimate.

There are many lessons we can gain from this verse, including the fact that **marriage is sacred, even to an unbeliever**. This is given as the reason for the previous verse, which indicates its permanency. It shows that unmarried persons should not bear children, but it does not suggest that children born in an unholy relationship are at fault. †

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

Kenney's Pennies

“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven’” (Matthew 19:14 NKJV). How can anyone harm a little child, in or out of the womb? Do you know that the Bible uses the same word for a baby in or out of the womb? I realize that some do not care about this, but they will have to answer for such.



Prepositions Matter

David R. Kenney

The idea that “prepositions matter” may seem like a superfluous point, but one may be surprised how careless one can be with the use of prepositions. Generally speaking, prepositions provide detail as to **when** or **where** something occurred, and these words may also indicate **how** something occurred. It is not uncommon for people unfamiliar with our English language to struggle to choose the correct preposition. Since English is our common language, we take many of the rules we were taught for granted. Of course, sometimes we pick up bad habits and commit errors relating to prepositions without thinking about it. Sometimes I feel like I need to take a class on remedial English myself!

Koine Greek also has prepositions. One may think that knowing the proper use of prepositions in Greek is a minor matter, but that is a mistake. Consider Acts 2:38 and the expression *“for the remission of sins.”* The preposition *“for”* can be used in such a way that does **not** match what the preposition εἰς means. Translations sometimes prefer to retain *“for”* so people can argue that baptism is **not** a salvation issue but a demonstration of salvation that was received prior to baptism. These efforts attempt to argue the term *“for”* has the meaning “because of,” but this is misleading. Questions I like to ask those who argue baptism is for salvation already obtained are, “Then why is baptism even in the New Testament? Why are baptisms in Acts treated with urgency?”

Take for example a circle to illustrate the relationship among Greek prepositions. The preposition I want you to notice carefully is εἰς which would point directly into the circle. This preposition pertains to movement from outside the circle to inside it. You do not have to know Greek to understand the meaning of various prepositions in relationship to a circle.

Scholars point out that εἰς is always forward looking, never backward. Common charts that one might find on the Internet depict an arrow pointing into a circle, but different prepositions are used for *“in”* (ἐν) and *“out”* (ἐκ). Claiming that *“for”* in Acts 2:38 is pointing backward to an event that has

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already occurred clearly does not match prepositional diagrams! However, being lost in one's sins and then moving from a lost to saved condition through repentance and baptism clearly is a forward moving process!


If you look at Acts 2:38 in *The Interlinear NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English: The Nestle Greek Text with a Literal English Translation* by Alfred Marshall, you will find an interesting note attached to εἰς. Rather than “for” or “because of,” Marshall has “with a view to” forgiveness of sins. When the NIV came out in 1973, the original translation of Acts 2:38 was ***“Peter replied: ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”*** Notice how clear this translation is that the result of repentance and baptism is ***“that your sins may be forgiven.”*** When this translation came out, there were complaints from various corners about the translation of εἰς. Why? Because they preferred the ambiguity, or they preferred a meaning that fit their presuppositions. Think prepositions are a minor matter? You had better think again. The outcry was so strong, that they yielded and changed the NIV translation in 1984 to ***“for the forgiveness of your sins.”*** When those who were a part of the 1973 edition of the NIV were asked about the change, the reply was basically, “We translated it correctly the *first* time.”

Of course, ***“for”*** could be a valid translation of the term if one understands the meaning to be “for the purpose of obtaining” rather than “because of something already obtained,” but this is not how some denominations represent the translation of εἰς, since they minimize the role of baptism in the plan of salvation (if they do not outright dismiss baptism altogether). Need an example of this being done? Consult the *Amplified Bible*, which reads, “because of the forgiveness of your sins.” The expression ***“for the forgiveness of sins”*** is probably the most common translation of this phrase, but notice some others of interest: ***“unto the remission of sins”*** (ASV), ***“into the remission of sins”*** (CJB), ***“so that your sins will be forgiven”*** (CEV), ***“so that you may have your sins forgiven”*** (Phillips), ***“so that your sins may be forgiven”*** (NRSV) and ***“to remission of sins”*** (YLT). While I am certainly not endorsing Bible translations here, one can easily see that

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there is a difference in treating εἰς as “because of” or “for the purpose of.”

Wayne Jackson is the first I read who made the salient point that the phrase ***“for the remission of sins”*** is the exact phrase Jesus used at the instituting of the Lord’s Supper when He said ***“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”*** (Matthew 26:28 NKJV). Here is a basic question: Had Jesus’ blood been shed already, or was His blood about to be shed? It may seem like a basic question, and it is. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper **before** He had shed His blood during the crucifixion. The shedding of His blood was forward looking. In like manner, the people on Pentecost were told, ***“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,”*** because they had yet to repent and to be baptized. Remember, their cry was, ***“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*** **Did Peter tell them what to do or what had been done for them?** Certainly, Christ had died for their salvation, but the doing was still involved in the repenting and being baptized! By doing so, they moved forward from a lost state and into a saved state.

With all the fuss against a straightforward command to be immersed so that one’s sins can be washed away, it reminds me of the wise counsel a servant gave his master who sought to wash another terminal condition, albeit physical rather than spiritual, away. ***“My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”*** (2 Kings 5:13). Sage advice! Repent and be baptized so that your sins may be washed away! 

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David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA. His “Kenney’s Pennies” also appear in *The Voice of Truth International*.



Scavenger Hunt

through Philippians

Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. For what two negative motivations did some preach Christ?
2. How did Paul entreat the Christians to treat each other?
3. At what name will everyone one day bow?
4. Who did Paul soon plan to send to the church at Philippi?
5. Who did Paul already send to the church at Philippi?
6. Of what tribe was Paul?
7. Where is our citizenship?
8. List three individuals, other than Timothy, that Paul names in the letter.
9. In what state are we to be content?
10. Christians from whose household sent greetings by way of Paul?

We Need a New Generation of Phinehases

Hiram Kemp

The children of Israel were on their way from Egypt to Canaan, but they had some hurdles to overcome along the way. They had problems with faith, food and also with foreign enemies. One of the problems that Israel faced in the wilderness was a king named Balak, who hired a prophet named Balaam to curse them. God forbade Balaam from cursing the people of



Israel. He was only allowed to bless them (Numbers 23:1-12, 25-26). Once Balaam realized he could not curse the children of Israel with his speech, he attempted to seduce them to sin with the Moabite women (Numbers 25:1). The Israelites gave in

to Balaam's temptation and joined themselves to idols and displeased the Lord (Numbers 25:2-3). God had Moses kill all of those who engaged

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in this idolatrous behavior in order to remove the wickedness from their midst (Numbers 25:4-5; cf. Exodus 20:2-6).

After God had shown His hatred for the fornication of Israel mixed with idolatry, an Israelite man, Zimri (Numbers 25:14), marched into the camp one day with a Midianite woman, Cozbi (Numbers 25:15). Not only did the Israelite come in with the forbidden woman, but he also did it in the sight of all of the people, and no one did anything about it (Numbers 25:6). It was at this time that Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, rose up with a javelin and killed them both (Numbers 25:7-8). God blessed Phinehas and turned away from His anger toward Israel (Numbers 25:10-15). While this Old Testament account of righteous indignation and punishment may be hard for many to accept, it teaches profound truths we need to remember and practice. Phinehas sets an example that must be reproduced today as we desperately need a new generation of Phinehases.

Courage Not to Follow the Crowd

As the Israelite Zimri marched into the camp with the Midianite woman, some Israelites might have whispered about how wrong it was. Perhaps some Israelites reasoned, 'It was not lawful for him to have her,' but no one did anything about it (cf. Mark 6:18). Sometimes we may see things that we know are wrong, but we are afraid to speak up and do something because we are all alone. The majority is not always correct, and just because most people are silent does not mean we should be (Exodus 23:2). Most people are on the wide road that leads to destruction, and we should not expect them to speak up about unrighteousness (Matthew 7:13-14). When Phinehas saw wrong, he did not wait to get the approval of his contemporaries before he acted. Phinehas was convicted already because he knew that the fornication and idolatry of Zimri and Cozbi offended his God, such as Psalm 139:21-22 teaches.

We need a new generation of Phinehases who will not follow the blind culture in which we currently live but instead will follow the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Matthew 15:14). It is possible to silently approve of the wrong of others. If we do, we will give an account (Romans 1:32). God is pleased when His people do not follow the crowd but instead

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follow the way of the cross. Be like Phinehas and avoid the temptation to do what everyone else is doing.

Zealous for God

When God pronounced a blessing on Phinehas, He said that he was zealous or jealous for God, and this drove him to act (Numbers 25:11). Phinehas did not stand up and strike Zimri and Cozbi because he simply did not think they were a cute couple. There was something deeper and more important driving Phinehas' behavior than whether or not he thought Zimri and Cozbi should be together. He was concerned with what God thought about it. God had already shown His disdain for these types of relationships. If Phinehas was going to have God's approval, he needed to be against it, too. God described his attitude as zealous. This Hebrew word in this context means to campaign for someone. Phinehas' behavior was his effort to campaign for God as he was aligning himself with the God of Heaven (Exodus 32:26).

We need to be zealous for the Lord and to be "campaigning" for Him in the same way that Phinehas did in the wilderness. When God calls homosexuality an abomination, we need to say the same thing without apology as we show the world around us that we are on the side of God and what He says about sexual immorality of any kind (Romans 1:26-27; Leviticus 18:22). We should be zealous for God as we speak of the pure worship of the New Testament that is free from the doctrines and deviations of men (Matthew 15:7-9). Being zealous for God is too many times defined as simply being excited about God and having a mind that is interested in the things of God. Biblically speaking, to be zealous for God is more than just what we feel but also how we behave.

It should also be noted that our zeal should be accompanied with knowledge (Romans 10:1-4). To have zeal without knowledge is to run full speed into a ditch. Yet, to have knowledge without zeal is to be stagnant and useless in the kingdom of God. Our zeal must motivate us to speak up for God and serve Him, even when it is not easy (Matthew 16:24-25). In a country where so many campaign for so many earthly causes, we need a new generation of Phinehases who will campaign for the eternal cause of Christ.


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Enjoy Peace with God

God promised a covenant of peace with Phinehas as a result of the courage and the conviction he showed (Numbers 25:12). It is more important to be at peace with God than to have peace with man. Maybe Phinehas doing the right thing raised some eyebrows in the Israelite camp as Phinehas killed this couple right before their eyes. Some people might have even viewed Phinehas as a troublemaker and a disrupter of the peace. The truth was that Phinehas removed God's wrath from the people, and they enjoyed true peace as a result. God calls us to be peacemakers, and that often involves engaging in conflict to accomplish peace (Matthew 5:9). God made peace through the blood of Jesus' cross (Colossians 1:20). Phinehas enjoyed peace with God, and that is what mattered the most.

We, too, must prioritize peace with God above peace with all others. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but He also promised to bring division (Matthew 10:34-36). The division that Jesus brought about came as some believed in Him and others did not. Even within the same household there might be differing views of Jesus that could lead to problems within a family (Matthew 10:37). If we cherish peace with our family over peace with our God, we will forfeit the covenant of peace that we can have with the Lord. Phinehas was willing to be at odds with everyone else if it meant peace with God, and we should do the same (Romans 5:1-2).

Conclusion

The Old Testament was written and preserved so that we could learn from it (Romans 15:4). The world wants to muzzle Christians and to tie our hands, but we must resist the world (1 John 5:4). **It is not enough to whisper about righteousness among ourselves. We must speak of it openly to the world.** We can stand up for God and stand against sin while still being respectful and kind (2 Timothy 2:24-26). We need a new generation of Phinehases who will stand up, confront evil and enjoy God's blessing as a result. 

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

Did God Use Evolution?

Rodney Nulph

Did God use evolution to create the world? What does it matter? In a recent conversation with an infidel, the question was posed, “Does it matter if God used evolution or not?” The Bible teaches clearly that evolution was not used to create the world and all things therein! If the Bible is true, then evolution is false. The Bible is true; therefore, evolution is false. The rest of this article will set forth the evidence that proves God did not use evolution in His masterful plan of creation. God’s Word gives clear details regarding creation.

The Persons of Creation

The Bible is crystal clear that time was not the agent of creation, as evolution teaches, but rather, the Trinity (Godhead, Genesis 1:26; Romans 1:20)! In Genesis 1:1, the masculine noun used for “**God**” is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is a plural term referring to the Sovereign, Son and Spirit. Interestingly, this plural form is the name most used for God in the Old Testament, appearing some 2,000 times. Paul reminded the Corinthians that God the Father created the world (1 Corinthians 8:6). John, the beloved, reminded his readers that Jesus the Son created the world (John 1:3; cf., Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; Ephesians 3:9). Job attested that the Spirit of God was instrumental in creation as well (Job 26:13; 33:4).

The Procedure of Creation

The Bible will never harmonize with evolution in the procedure of how the world came into existence. A host of action verbs detail the procedure God used to create this vast world in which we live. God “**created**” (Genesis 1:1a). The word used for “create” is the Hebrew verb *bara*, which means to create, fashion, shape something, out of nothing (*Strong’s*). Consequently, this verb is only ever used in connection with God. “**And God said**” (Genesis

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1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 20, et. al.). Notice the procedure was **not** millions of years of life evolving from amebas to blobs to apes, etc. ***“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast”*** (Psalm 33:6, 9)! ***“And God made”*** (Genesis 1:7). God’s procedure is revealed! Evolution was **not** the procedure God used, but rather, He used the power of His omnipotent voice!

The Plan of Creation

Not only did God detail the procedure for His creative power, but He also clearly revealed the plan. God’s plan did **not** involve millions of years as evolution teaches, but rather He used six literal 24-hour days to create this expanse called earth. As God revealed His plan to Moses, so that Moses could write it down, God used the word day throughout this plan (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Notice carefully how God defined the word ***“day”***: ***“and the evening and the morning were the... day”*** (Genesis 1:5)—not eons of time, but evening and morning.

The same timeframe that constitutes a day in our time was the timeframe for a day at the creation [except that we consider morning before evening rather than evening before



morning to constitute a day, Editor]. Amazingly, the Hebrew *yom* is used here for day. When the word *yom* is used in connection with a number, it refers to a literal day. For example, ***“And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat”*** (Genesis 8:4). The word day here, *yom*, refers to the 17th day of the month. Consequently, if the six days of creation were lengthy periods


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of time, then the seventh day would be the same. However, the Jews observed the Sabbath Day as a 24-hour day (Exodus 20:11). This does not fit the evolutionists' agenda, but logic and the Bible **cannot** be refuted. God created the world and all things therein just as His plan details, in six literal 24-hour days!

The Purpose of Creation

To the honest seeker of truth and reason, the very purpose of creation certainly points to the fact that God did not use evolution. Surely one purpose for which God created the world and all things therein was to show the irrefutable evidence of His existence. Paul reminded the Gentiles, *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:20). The Psalmist offered the same conclusion regarding the creation, *“...the firmament sheweth his handiwork”* (Psalm 19:1b). **God's fingerprints are everywhere!**

Conclusion

Did God use evolution to create the world? Does it matter? Dear readers, God did **not** use evolution to create the world but rather spoke this amazing landscape into existence by the power of His voice. It matters what we believe regarding this subject and any other Bible subject as well, because if God said it, that settles it. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). *“...let God be true and every man a liar”* (Romans 3:4b). 

[Editor's Note: Whether the universe is the result of evolution or God's creation affects the veracity, the integrity and the reliability of God's Word. It is an all or nothing scenario, really. If the first verse of the Bible and the following details about creation (versus evolution) cannot be trusted, all of the Bible is equally undermined. If evolution were true, then the Bible would be false. Since creation is true, evolution cannot be true. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

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Why Believe in God?

Terry Wheeler

To believe in something or someone is to put full confidence in that object or person. It is to develop a sense of trust that prompts such confidence.

This confidence is a regular part of life. We cannot function without it. The farmer plants seed with faith that the seed will produce a crop worthy of his efforts. Rocket scientists concentrate on mathematical formulae, expecting such computations to succeed into translating a theory into the action of rocket “flight.” Those who ride the rockets trust the scientists, engineers, mathematicians, builders and inventors who put it all together to get them safely into space and back to earth again. The new mother trusts the baby formula she buys, the customer his bank, a patient his doctor, the citizen his government and so on.

This trust is necessary precisely because we cannot see the processes involved to accomplish what we need. So, we hear the testimony, examine the evidence in relation to past success and draw conclusions on whether the benefit of such trust is warranted. We do this knowing that accidents happen, nobody’s perfect, information is limited and results cannot be totally guaranteed.

All of this makes it rather ridiculous, then, to fail to believe in the Lord. With the Bible as His testimony and nature as His demonstration, faith in God is the only rational conclusion to draw. To call such faith a “leap in the dark,” which we would rather not make, reveals a prejudice against the Lord that is without reason or excuse (Romans 1:20).

We should believe in God because all around us and within us demand we trust the Ultimate Reason for all that is here. Design, purpose, conscience and caring all point to One Who orchestrated it all, to our benefit (for it to be otherwise is an immeasurable waste, contradicting existence itself).

God being invisible to us is not a real problem, for the whole point of faith is to understand in real terms what we cannot see (Hebrews 11:1). The answer to doubt is to be open to the evidence, honestly consider its implications and then to embrace the conclusions that reason demands. ✝

Terry Wheeler preaches for the Village Church of Christ in Lady Lake, Florida, USA.

Come Meet Jesus as the Creator

John 1:1-3

Louis Rushmore

Thesis: To decisively demonstrate from Scripture that Jesus Christ is Creator of all.

Introduction:

1. Jesus Christ is principally responsible for the creation of all that exists.
2. In addition, Jesus Christ is responsible for the continued existence of all creation.
3. The array of passages are numerous that directly attribute to Jesus Christ the role of Creator.

Body:

- I. **The Godhead, comprised of three divine Persons, created everything.**
 - A. The Godhead is comprised of three Persons.
 1. Commonly, this Bible doctrine is known as the Trinity or the Triune God; the Trinity deserves a biblical study dedicated to it, though herein we only have time to introduce it.
 2. Three persons of the one Godhead appear in several New Testament passages (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 1:30-35; 3:21-22; 24:49; John 14:16-17, 25-26; Acts 2:32-33; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 5:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Titus 3:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:3, 13-14; Hebrews 2:3-4; 6:4-6; 10:29-31; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:4-6; Jude 20-21).
 3. Old Testament passages also acknowledge the three divine persons in one Godhead (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1-2; Luke 4:18; Hebrews 1:10; Psalm 102:25-27).
 4. Otherwise, Scripture refers to the three persons in one God as the Godhead (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9).
 5. We may find it difficult to understand, but the Father and the Son (Jesus Christ) are one in that Godhead (John 10:30).

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- B. The collective cooperation of the divine Persons in the one God-head created everything that exists.
 - 1. Plural pronouns in Scripture evidence the plurality of divine Persons responsible for creation (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7).
 - 2. The plural noun for God ['Elohim] in Scripture indicates the plurality of divine Persons responsible for creation (Genesis 1:26).

The supreme moment of creation arrived as God created man. The narrative presents God as calling on the heavenly court, or the other two members of the Trinity, to center all attention on this event. (Wycliffe)

The text tells us he was the work of 'ELOHIYM (OT:430), the Divine Plurality, marked here more distinctly by the plural pronouns US and OUR; and to show that he was the masterpiece of God's creation, all the persons in the Godhead are represented as united in counsel and effort to produce this astonishing creature. (Clarke)

Its form is plural, but the construction is uniformly singular, i.e. it governs a singular verb or adjective, unless used of heathen divinities (Ps 96:5; 97:7). It is characteristic of Hebrew that extension, magnitude and dignity, as well as actual multiplicity, are expressed by the plural. (ISBE)

II. Scripture emphasizes the role of Jesus Christ in creation.

- A. Many New Testament passages frankly attribute creation to Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Jesus Christ was coeternal with God the Father, and Jesus Christ created everything that was created (John 1:1-3).
 - 2. Jesus Christ was the Agent of God the Father for the creation of everything (1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9).
 - 3. Jesus Christ the Creator of the world came to the world (John 1:10).
- B. Scripture also affirms that Jesus Christ sustains all creation.
 - 1. The same power with which Jesus created everything, He uses to sustain that creation (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3).
 - 2. Hence, Jesus Christ is the Ruler of His creation (Revelation 3:14).

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These

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are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation" (Revelation 3:14 NIV).

"And to the messenger of the assembly of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the witness—the faithful and true—the chief of the creation of God" (Young's Literal Translation).


The beginning of the creation of God...Not the first of creatures as the Arians held and Unitarians do now, but the originating source of creation through whom God works (Col 1:15,18, a passage probably known to the Laodiceans, John 1:3; Heb 1:2, as is made clear by Rev 1:18; 2:8; 3:21; 5:13). (Robertson's)

The beginner, or author... (Vincent's)

Conclusion:

1. Jesus Christ is the Master of many roles: God in the flesh or incarnate, Master Teacher, Sacrifice, Savior, King and Judge.
2. Jesus Christ is also the Creator, and Sustainer of creation.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ who created all things is also the only one through whom mortals have access to redemption and the Father (Mark 16:16; John 14:6).
2. Erring Christians who have strayed can return to the Lord for another cleansing (Isaiah 44:22; Jeremiah 24:7; Hebrews 8:10-12). 

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Louis Rushmore is the Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*. He has been preaching since 1973 in the USA and abroad as well as authored several books and tracts. He resides in Ocala, Florida, USA.

Part Two

The War in the Church

Betty Burton Choate

If we belong to God, our values and ethics are not our own. They are set by His standards, and they govern everything about our lives.

Spiritually, I have believed that America has been preserved for special use in God's plan: It is here that the largest body of Christians lives. All of the tools needed to evangelize the world are available from the American base, for those Christians to obey the Great Commission. Americans have the freedom to come and go at will; the dollar is the desired currency everywhere; the English language is the international language.

Since World War II, much has been done by American Christians to evangelize the world—not enough. The job is far from complete, but the seed has been planted and nurtured in many nations.

Yet, what is happening to the American church now? We are engaged in a tragic war—a divide that will have long-lasting effects on our impact in the world. On the one hand, great vision is enabling tremendous programs of work: **Gospel Broadcasting Network** has set its sights on taking the Gospel to the entire world through satellite television. Many, many **websites** on the Internet, sponsored by individual congregations, carry articles and broadcasts to the masses. Telecasts and radio programs such as **“In Search of the Lord's Way,” “World Mission Radio,” “The Voice of Truth,” “Bible Talk”** and **“The Treasure of Truth”** bring the Gospel to millions every day. The bi-monthly evangelism paper **“House to House”** reaches millions of homes. **“World Video Bible School,” “World English School,” “World Bible School”** and **“Truth for Today”** are avenues for teaching masses throughout the world. *The Voice of Truth International* goes to many mission fields. Certainly, not since the first century have churches of Christ worked with such vision and commitment to obey the command to evangelize the world.

There are missionaries of the church in many nations and beyond that

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are local Christians in those and many other countries—mature in the faith—working through mass media, follow-up evangelism, Bible training schools and benevolence to reach their fellow-citizens.

Today, there are more Christians outside the US than in this country. In most cases, these are the products of American missionaries and American dollars. Countless Christians here have sacrificed greatly to make that work possible. Radio, TV, literature programs, colleges, training schools, children's homes and benevolent works in the wake of disaster have reaped great harvests. Always, more work must be done, but there are strong, well-grounded churches in many countries of the world.

However, here at home a tragic war is dividing the Lord's church. We are in advanced stages of an apostasy, much like the one that swept away 85% of the body of Christ at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Leaders among us are compromising the truth, fellowshiping denominations and rewriting what the New Testament says about the church, salvation, worship, the Christian life, Heaven and Hell. Further, many of the larger churches throughout America are following these apostate men, leaving the truth and making the body of Christ no more than a "community fellowship."

Even among the faithful congregations, many Christians are too busy living secular lives to have time to study God's Word or to have the desire to teach their neighbors or fellow-workers. Most congregations are not growing numerically because most Christians in an entire lifetime are not teaching a single person—not winning a single soul. Statistics say that we are even losing 70% of our own children! Have we forgotten that Jesus said in John 15:8, ***"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away"***?

We must consider the facts. Older folks are going to die; the majority of the younger folks don't know the Bible very well and can easily be led astray when the older generation is gone. With apostasy taking the larger churches, death decimating many of the rural churches and unconcern for souls rendering many Christians sterile, the future looks bleak.

It would seem that the purpose for preserving America may be vanishing. Tragically, it seems that the Lord's church herself is betraying her God, just as Israel did in turning from truth to worship according to

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the religions of those around her. *“An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power [apostasy]; And My people love to have it so...”* (Jeremiah 5:30-31).

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down, says the LORD.

Thus says the LORD: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.” But they said, “We will not walk in it.” Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!” But they said, “We will not listen.” [apostasy]

...Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring CALAMITY on this people—the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not heeded My words, [disobedience, neglect] nor My law, but rejected it. (Jeremiah 6:15-20)

Behold, a people comes from the north country...They are cruel and have no mercy...As men of war set in array against you, O daughter of Zion. We have heard the report of it; our hands grow feeble. Anguish has taken hold of us, pain as of a woman in labor. Do not go out into the field, nor walk by the way. Because of the sword of the enemy, fear is on every side. (Jeremiah 6:22-25)

“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these works,” says the LORD, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave

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to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight...Therefore, do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I WILL NOT HEAR YOU.” (Jeremiah 7:12-16)

Much of our nation has not only forgotten God, but it has defied Him and all of His values and judgments. The church has not fulfilled its commission to bring the message of salvation to the world. Instead, much of it is turning from the purity of the Word to accept denominational error and to turn the very body of Christ into a “community denomination,” teaching whatever will tickle the ears of those in attendance. Those who are doing this are as much the betrayers of Christ as was Judas that night in Gethsemane.

The “Roaring Twenties” had a reputation of wildness. That scenario became the “innocent” and “religious” era of the 40’s and 50’s when our Lord’s church grew at a faster rate than at any other time in modern history. What transpired between those two pictures? The horrors of the Great Depression and World Wars I and II.

Are we in such a downward spiral of evil that the only way to reverse it is through an Assyrian purging or a Babylonian captivity? *“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isaiah 10:5-7).*

Politically, as a nation, we are in a great debate about the war between the radical Muslim world and the West. Many are deluded into thinking that if we



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leave Iraq and the Middle East, the conflict will fade away.

Radical Muslims have said over and over that they intend to bury us. They have boasted that Christians will have to convert or die. In our western “superiority complex,” we are not even listening.

Whether or not they will be allowed to carry out their threat, the threat is real. Are we noticing that Islam is taking over Africa, killing believers in Christ if they don’t “convert”? Have we read the statistics that in most nations in Europe, the Muslim population is the only one that is growing? The birth rate among Caucasians is too low to even be reproducing itself, while the most popular name for new babies is “Mohammed.” In the US, too, the Muslim population is the fastest growing, both through birth and through converts in prisons. A great and tragic change lies before the entire world.

Can anything be done about it? We can allow and enable it to happen, as Americans, if we allow our country to continue in its downward spiral into evil. Or, the “silent majority” can recognize the impending crisis and can work as hard to turn things around as the humanists are working to destroy us.

In the church, as individuals, we can get serious about our commitment to God, turning away from the secular lives we’ve been living six days a week. We can study His Word diligently, and we can see ourselves as souls left in this world for the express purpose of bringing the truth to those within our range of influence. We can have a greater vision for the world, realizing that we are the tools, physically and spiritually, that God would use to stop the advancement of the scourge of Islam over the earth.

Suppose the worst happens. Suppose that through sheer numbers, barbaric cruelty and our own unworthiness of being spared, Islam is able to sweep across our country, wreaking havoc and death on our people as it is doing in Africa. In Ethiopia, just last month, people who were gathered for worship behind locked doors in church buildings, for fear of the Muslim insurgents, were burned alive. Those who tried to escape were hacked to death.

One young man in Somalia reported for work at his factory. Muslims thronged the door, dragging him out into the street and demanding to know if he was a “Christian sinner.” He replied that he was a Christian, and he was beaten to death.

FROM THE HEART OF

If this kind of world becomes ours, we will learn what it means to “*count the cost.*” Am I ready? Would I have the conviction to die for Christ rather than recant? Do you have that kind of conviction?

In documentaries showing the training of children in Muslim madrassas, extremist teachers are training four- and five-year-olds to glory in jihad and death for the religion. Do we doubt that this kind of commitment and brainwashing will breed a new, larger and more radical generation of Muslims?

By contrast, are we, as Christian parents, realizing the critical need to teach our children deeply and thoroughly so that they will be equipped to withstand the horrors that may come upon them? To us, today, living in our secular, comfortable world, such fears may seem absurd—fear-mongering—but for the millions in the Middle East and in Africa who have been killed, and the millions more who live displaced lives, the scenario is real. What a tragedy if we wait until it comes before we realize that we need to be prepared and that we need to prepare our children! ✝


Betty Burton Choate, widow of J.C. Choate, founder of *The Voice of Truth International*.



Noting Your Bible



Call on the Name of the Lord

1. In the front of your Bible, note this topic and next to it write, **"Genesis 4:26."** Write next to this verse, **"(See 13:4, 21:33)."**
2. Turn to Genesis 13, and note, **"In the context of worship (also 26:25) (see 1 Kings 18:24)."** You can note, too, that Abraham had obedient faith (Hebrews 11).
3. In 1 Kings 18:24, write, **"Something done by the power/authority of God (also 2 Kings 5:11) (see Colossians 3:17)."**
4. At Colossians 3:17, note, **"Christians are to do all by Christ's authority (see Psalm 116:17)."**
5. Turn to Psalm 116 and write, **"Calling on the name of the Lord includes giving Him thanks (see Acts 22:16)."**
6. In Acts 22:16, write, **"Includes obedience to His commandments (also 2:38; 10:48) (see Joel 2:32)."**
7. At Joel 2:32, note, **"Salvation through Christ in prophecy (also Zephaniah 3:9) (fulfilled in Acts 2:21)."**
8. Turn to Acts 2:21 and write, **"(See Romans 10:13)."** Also, in the context of Acts, note what was commanded of believers in 2:38.
9. Turn to Romans 10, and in the context of verses 8-17, note, **"Calling on the name of the Lord includes confessing Him, and anyone who does so, Jew and Gentile, can be saved! (see 1 Corinthians 1:2)." You can note also in Romans 10 that Paul already had talked about baptism (6:1-4) and again see Acts 22:16 with this passage.**
10. Turn to 1 Corinthians 1:2 and write, **"Those who call on His name are sanctified saints (see Acts 4)."**
11. Read the context of Acts 4 that centers around preaching Jesus, and note in verse 7 and 10, **"The power is in the name of Jesus"** and verse 12, **"No other name will save (see Philippians 2:9-11)."**
12. Turn to Philippians 2 and soberly consider this passage. One day (Romans 14:10-13), everyone will bow his or her knee and confess Jesus as Lord. It will be too late for many to do so willingly (Matthew 7:21). May we **"call on the name of the Lord,"** submitting to His authority, today! 

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

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

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

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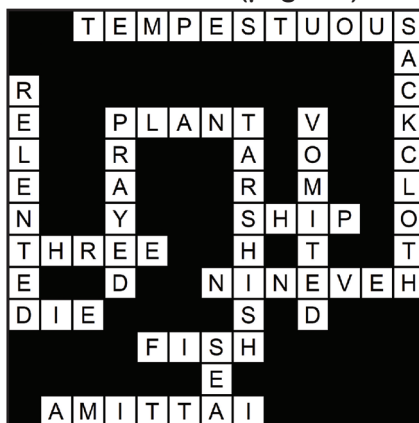
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (Page 42)

1. Gospel
2. If they held fast to what he had preached
3. Christ died, He was buried and rose the third day
4. Peter
5. 500
6. Most of them
7. Paul
8. Himself
9. He had persecuted the church of God
10. By the grace of God
11. He had labored more abundantly than anyone else
12. Grace of God
13. No

Bible Find (page 94)



Scavenger Hunt (page 89)

Answers:

1. envy and strife (1:15)
2. "better than himself" (2:3)
3. Jesus (2:10)
4. Timothy (2:19)
5. Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
6. Benjamin (3:5)
7. Heaven (3:20)
8. Euodia, Syntyche, Clement (4:2-3)
9. whatever state in which we are (4:11)
10. Caesar's household (4:21)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

I Wonder

Betty Burton Choate

**Sometimes
In my longing for a soul,
In my impatience
For Your work to be done,
I cry
Deep hurting tears.**

**It's been such a long time since
He died....
So many souls have died
Untold
Since then.**

**I wonder,
Do You ever
— watching us —
Cry
Deep hurting tears
Because too many of us are
So slow
And unconcerned?
And because it would be so hard
To limit
The greatness of Your power
To the size of tools
So slow?**