

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

Our Wonderful Savior

Page 15

Nature's Design

Page 17

The New Birth

Page 36

*Why Do You Immerse
for Baptism?*

Page 49

Nowhere to Run

Page 51

Fill My Barns

Page 66

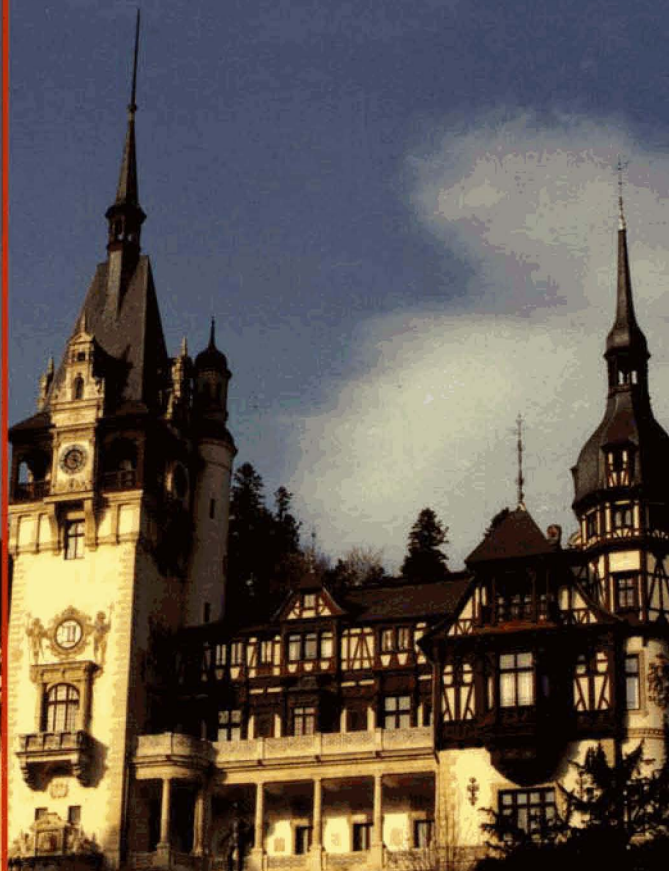
*Are We Saved
By Water?*

Page 93

*To Judge or
Not to Judge*

Page 97

Romania





I Heard the Old Year Talking

I heard the Old Year talking,
and he seemed to say to me,
"I am what men have made
me – not what I hoped to be.
I did not bring the failures;
my days were bright and new,
I was the time allotted – the
work was man's to do.

"I am what others made me; I had no will or choice;
Through all the days of trial I was given not a voice.
If vict'ry came, man earned it; his was the faith and power.
If lessons came, God gave them; I furnished but the hour.

"I came here empty-handed – a year that was to be,
And what I am in passing, mankind has made of me;
I am their petty failures, their glory, their success;
I am their souls' advancement, their shame and happiness.

"I was not born in evil or governed by the stars,
I brought to some high honors, to others ugly scars;
Only my days were numbered; I was the time for toil,
And each has reaped the harvest, as he has tilled the soil.

"I am what men have made me – not what I hoped to be,
And so shall be the New Year which soon shall follow me;
The days are good or evil, as each man serves and strives,
For years are but the records on which men write their lives."

– Author Unknown

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23 EDITIONS

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).



What must I do to be saved?

Acts 16:30

"...If you do not believe that I am He [Jesus is the Saviour], you will die in your sins..."

(John 8:24).

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19).

"...with the mouth confession ["I believe that Jesus Christ in the Son of God," Acts 8:37] is made to salvation"

(Romans 10:10).

"...as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that

just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"

(Romans 6:3,4).

The Church . . .

"Upon this rock I will build My church"
(Matthew 16:18).

"...I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God..." (1 Timothy 3:15).

"Christ is a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast..."
(Hebrews 3:6).

"...the churches of Christ greet you"
(Romans 16:16).

"...I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church..." (Ephesians 5:25-27).

"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved [by the name of Jesus Christ]" (Acts 4:12).

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14,15).



THE CONSEQUENCES OF ISOLATION

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

We are living in a huge world, a world with seven continents and many nations. All have their natural riches, handicrafts, tourist locations, etc. That means that all of these nations need one another, just as people need one another.

Unless we are willing to mix and mingle among ourselves, and unless nations trade, share, and help one another, then everyone will be depriving themselves of untold benefits. Without contact and association we are unable to share the discoveries and advances of others, the knowledge, skills, medicines, and food supplies of one another. We may need loans to help build our economies, aid in protecting ourselves from others, and products and equipment to help us to go forward. Without these contacts and associations we will be left behind.

Even in modern times there have been countries with a policy of isolation. Sometimes isolation may occur because of ideologies, religious beliefs, economics, the inability to compete, or because of one nation making war on its neighbors. There have been those who have wanted to sell their products to the rest of the world but were unwilling to buy the products of others. Some are isolationists because they are afraid, always thinking that other nations are wanting to take them over or to cheat them out of their wealth. Some have accused foreigners of being spies or trouble-makers, inciting riot and rebellion, and therefore their people live in constant fear of any contact with foreigners. Some politicians want all of their people to be educated only in a local language, while their own children are studying in a foreign country, preparing themselves to work and

communicate in an international language. You can guess, then, who will continue to dominate and control the politics in those countries.

Nations that have remained in isolation over the years are the ones who are poverty stricken, have been left far behind with reference to modern amenities, and have no voice in the policies of the world. While they shun others, others also shun and ignore them. Time, in such places, seems to stand still and no one is benefitted by the isolationist policy. When these closed countries finally do come out of their isolation, they begin immediately to see changes for the better. They are benefitted by what others can do for them and they, in turn, are able to offer goods and services to sister nations. Their citizens begin to change. A different attitude begins to be expressed. Trading takes place, medical supplies are received, new avenues of education open up — life becomes less difficult and offers more hope.

Just as nations may isolate themselves to their own hurt, spiritually the church can do the same. Numerous congregations, feeling that they have home needs such as a new building, a new van, another local worker to put on the payroll, and many other such things, may feel that all of these needs must be met before any consideration is given to the needs of others. Especially is this reasoning typical concerning appeals for help in foreign countries. Some will refuse to support a foreign work, saying that they want to do some mission work nearby so they can visit it from time to time to see how it is progressing and to encourage it. Of course, in many cases this is only an excuse to ward off foreign appeals and to keep their money at home.

But when enough congregations isolate themselves from the rest of the world and focus only on their own needs, their attitude gradually influences the entire church in an area, a State, or a country. The result is an inward emphasis that is diametrically opposed to all that Christ and the early church stood for, one that kills the evangelistic spirit of the church so that little is done at home or abroad.

Jesus did not promote isolation but said, instead, that we should go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). He commanded that we go and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). When we obey Him, and do it with enthusiasm and zeal, we will be able to evangelize the world and also take care of our needs at home. When it comes right down to it, **we should put our first emphasis on world evangelism**, even with a willingness to sacrifice, preferring to do without some things at home in order to obey our Lord — and He will bless and reward our sacrifices.

When we fail to carry out the great commission, we make ourselves isolationists, and we will die both spiritually and numerically. We will die because we will be putting ourselves first, materialism will devour us, we will no doubt become liberal or fanatical, and we will have no spiritual goals to live for. With no vision or plans to evangelize we will lose interest, personally, we will lose our children, and the church will be no more than a boring club. How sad!

The question here is, who wants to live, to save their children, to save their community, their city, their state, their country, and the world? If you do, you can't be an isolationist, one who wants to stay at home and do nothing. It is time to get concerned about our own souls, our family members, and the rest of the world. It is time to take Jesus seriously, to wake up, to bring the local church to life, to get the members and young people involved in the Lord's work.

There is tremendous work to do at home, mission trips can be planned, you can get involved in a World Bible School program, invite a missionary every few months to tell you the exciting things he is doing in the mission field where he labors. You can write missionaries, help with some local or foreign outreach project, encourage the elders to support a missionary and even to sponsor one. You can begin a mission class and focus on some local needs and also encourage the younger members to plan to go to the mission field. Oh, there are so many things you can do! You don't have to be a preacher, or even a recognized leader in the church. You simply need to be a Christian with a desire to do the Lord's will, to be involved in spreading His message.

With that desire, and the willingness to work, and to work with others, doors will begin to open. As you go through those doors, others will be opened, and as you continue you will be amazed at what you and other members and the local church can do. The critical thing, though, is to make a beginning, and to have the determination to continue. You can do it! Just commit your direction and goals to God, and then get up and start.

Listen, the world is lost, nations are lost, tribal groups are lost, sporting groups are lost, entertainment groups are lost, and all kind of other professional groups are lost. *Even most congregations at home need to be revived!* They are not obeying the Lord's command to take the gospel to the world. They need you to awaken them, to urge them to go to work, to take the gospel to the lost at home and abroad. Please don't sit there and die. Live, and help others to live. †



IS EVERY - THING THAT HAPPENS MEANT TO HAPPEN?

Byron Nichols

More and more people, including Christians, are expressing their belief that “everything that happens happens for a reason,” or “everything that happens is meant to happen.”

Without any desire to be unfair or to misrepresent what others believe when they say that they believe that “everything that happens is meant to happen,” please consider the suggestion that there needs to be some careful consideration given to the implications of these beliefs and where those beliefs logically lead. No doubt most who accept this idea do not subscribe to all of these implications, but where can the line be drawn, and on what grounds?

Fatalism

There is a doctrine called “fatalism,” and it is defined as “the doctrine that all things are determined by fate, or take place by inevitable necessity; a disposition to accept everything as inevitable and predetermined by fate.” This is basically what is involved in the idea that everything happens because it was meant to happen.

Those of us who believe that God is all-powerful and is in control of the universe should have some difficulty in accepting the idea that everything happens because it is meant to happen. Who or what causes everything to happen? Does God do this? If so, this puts God in a position of being responsible for all sins, all tragedies, all troubles, everything that happens. Can this possibly be true? Sin happens. Surely God does not cause sin to happen. The sins of mankind brought about the death of God's only beloved Son — please don't say that God caused that death to take place because He caused the sins to be committed. Terrible calamities occur, such as hurricanes, floods, fires, etc. that destroy many lives, and often some or all of the lives lost are people who have not yet heard the message of eternal salvation that has originated with God. Does God cause people to die in their sins? How can we believe the Bible when it tells us that God is love and that He loves everyone and wants all to be freed from their sins, and then at the same time believe that God is the cause responsible for the destruction of some of the very folks for whom Jesus died?

If everything happens for a purpose, surely we are all then but powerless pawns on God's great gameboard of life. Surely there is a better answer than this. God didn't create robots — He created intelligent humans in His likeness.

The Providence of God

Oh yes, we believe in God's providence, but His **providing** for us is far different from His causing us to do what we do. In the beginning God put His created humans, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, with the ability to discern right from wrong, but also with the freedom or ability to choose right or wrong. As a result, Eve's sin was her sin, not action forced upon her by God. Cain did not kill Abel because that was "meant to be" — he killed him because of his own disobedience.

Please take the time to review the following verses of Scripture which are related to this topic: Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; Colossians 3:23; Isaiah 59:1-2; and Hebrews 5:8-9. These verses are very important. They deserve your thoughtful attention before you read further in this article.

For Your Consideration

God is powerful, but Satan is also powerful, having been allowed to be so by God. Satan is definitely responsible for much of what happens in this world.

Temptations happen in the lives of everyone, but God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13-15). Furthermore, God provides a way of escape from every temptation that does come along (1 Corinthians 10:13).

If everything happens for a purpose, what is the purpose for such things as these:

—A terrible earthquake that destroys so much property and takes a great many lives? A small child being raped by someone who has no concern for anyone or any thing? An elderly man or woman who is beaten or killed by a teenager on drugs or alcohol? A husband and father who loses his job, and thus his ability to provide for his family? Sin in general? The list could go on and on.

Question: If this belief is accurate, why make an effort to accomplish anything or do what is right? Things will happen a certain way regardless. Also, why pray? It won't change things, according to this idea. However, James 5:16 says that "*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

Good things may very well result from bad events, but that is more attributable to God's providence than to God's causing the bad events to take place. May we not carelessly put God in a position of blame for things that He ALLOWS to happen, but does not CAUSE to happen. †

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p style="text-align: center;">GOD</p> <p>Jesus and the Extra Mile.....12</p> <p>Our Wonderful Savior15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EVIDENCES</p> <p>Nature's Design17</p> <p>Backed into a Corner19</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE WORD OF GOD</p> <p>The Power of a Seed23</p> <p>Bible Study25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY</p> <p>Balance: Compassion.28</p> <p>Blood Transfusions30</p> <p>This Is Love for God.....32</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SALVATION</p> <p>Can One Who Is a Christian. . ? .34</p> <p>The New Birth36</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE CHURCH</p> <p>Christ's Church of the.39</p> <p>God and Leadership41</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHURCH GROWTH</p> <p>The Jerusalem Church.43</p> <p>Why Do You Immerse. . . ?49</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHURCH HISTORY</p> <p>Nowhere to Run51</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WORSHIP</p> <p>Reminder of the Terms.56</p> <p>The Purpose of Singing.58</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION</p> <p>A Simple Strategy.61</p> <p>A Simple Method.64</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING</p> <p>God, Please Fill My Barns.66</p> <p>Christians Are to be Known. . . .68</p> <p>Pornography70</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PROVERBS 17:22</p> <p>Humor73</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE CHRISTIAN HOME</p> <p>The Will to Discipline.....75</p> <p>Why Did God Make Woman?76</p> <p>Coping with the Pressures.78</p> <p style="text-align: center;">COMFORT AND REASSURANCE</p> <p>The Providence of God81</p> <p>A Prayer Before Going to.84</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BIBLE CHARACTERS</p> <p>Sarah, A Beautiful Woman.86</p> <p>A King Who Tore Down Idols88</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BIBLE QUESTIONS</p> <p>Are Babies Born in Sin?91</p> <p>Are We Saved by Water?93</p> <p>Religious Titles.....94</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TEXTUAL STUDIES</p> <p>To Judge or Not to Judge97</p> <p>Nebuchadnezzar's Dream99</p> <p style="text-align: center;">POEMS AND WRITINGS</p> <p>The Twenty-Third Psalm14</p> <p>The Devil's Bible24</p> <p>When Choices I Must Make26</p> <p>Later Than You Think29</p> <p>To These I Commit.33</p> <p>If I Should Stumble.....35</p> <p>What Must I Do to be Saved?42</p> <p>When You Are the Minority55</p> <p>Live for Today63</p> <p>Judgment65</p> <p>Isn't It Funny?67</p> <p>Sonnet.....69</p> <p>Neighbors.....80</p> <p>Courage or Foolishness83</p> <p>Example89</p>
--	---

Be Negative95

FEATURES

Verse Search27
Quick Commentary38
Who Am I?90
Puzzle Page96
Puzzle AnswersBack Page

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

Romania, from the Past
to the Present.....101
Spiritual History.....103
Current Information108
From Slavery to Freedom109

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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NATIONAL** carries a message that
will underscore all that you are
teaching on a personal basis. *But
it can't work unless you place it in
the hands of your friend.* — JCC

The Mystery of the Ages

Mystery of eternal ages
— Turning point in time —
Knew no heralding of trumpets,
Was not recognized by Pilate,
Sanhedrin nobles,
Or the mob;
Bowed with sin
and condemnation,
Jesus cried aloud and died.

Who was present
For the moment
When Salvation's price was paid?
Weeping, stood His mother,
John,
A few women who believed,
And those who mocked in unbelief,
But not
The men He'd gathered round Him
As He taught and healed the land,
Not His brothers or His sisters
Had been made to understand.
Only later did they own Him,
Risen Lord,
Transcendent God,
Holy Lamb of man's redemption,
Judge in glory of us all;
Only later did they fathom
— Preach to earth's remotest isle —
That the babe laid in the manger
— That the man laid in the grave —
Must be born in hearts of sinners,
Dead in sin,
Now dead to sin
And born again, alive in Him,
Eternally.

— Betty Burton Choate



Michael L. King

As the shadows of the cross began to fall across the path of Jesus, you could see Him struggling to go a little farther. Jesus epitomized the kind of attitude and response that He

had earlier taught in His discourse on the mount (Matthew 5:38-42). Our Lord has never asked us to go places where He has not been or to do things that He has not done. He truly is our "trailblazer" in every aspect of life. It does make sense for us to "*look unto Jesus*" for the example and pattern after which we fashion our own lives.

Consider some thoughts about areas in which Jesus pressed a bit further than others might have done. When He came to **DO THE WILL OF THE FATHER** who had sent Him (John 4:34), He took the assignment seriously. We too should take our responsibility seriously and "*abound in the work of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Much of the incarnate life of Christ was

spent in **PRAYER**. Jesus could be found praying before daylight (Mark 1:35), in the garden (Matthew 26:36), and before His death, when His heart must have

GOD

been very heavy (Hebrews 5:7). During times of crisis and decision-making, Jesus prayed (John 7:5). Usually, others were the object of His prayer life. Even today, Jesus prays (speaks) as intercessor in behalf of those who have come to God (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus went further than most are willing to experience in the area of **LOVE**. Those Pharisees and Romans who made His life and ministry on earth a most difficult chore were loved by Him. He loved His enemies, and for them laid down His life (John 15:13). Those who could not, or would not love in return, were loved by Him (Luke 6:32). The Lord's love was not just a much-talked-about but little-done kind of love, but He demonstrated His love in life and in death (Romans 5:6-8). Luke referenced his Gospel as being a "*treatise . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*" (Acts 1:1).

How could anyone have asked for more in the area of **SACRIFICE**? He was the greatest giver of all. Jesus died, not a martyr, but as a **willing** sacrifice (John 10:18). The figurative expression has been made, with a full realization that Jesus was **nailed** to the cross, that the "Chords that bound him to the cross were: a Savior's love; loyalty to the eternal purpose of God; and a resignation to God's will." Just as He

gave, we are instructed to "*abound*" in the grace of giving, which means "to exceed a fixed or expected amount" (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Consider the **WORK** which Jesus did during His earthly pilgrimage. He explained His purpose for being on the earth as, "*I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*" (Matthew 20:28). We know that He worked until He was weary, as was the case in the time spent with the woman at the well (John 4:6). Paul was influenced by Christ in His work, for he worked night and day (Acts 26:7). The need for sacrificial workers today is great! We can look either to Jesus or Paul and find the kind of commitment necessary for being a godly person (1 Corinthians 15:58).

One final area is possibly the key to Jesus' willingness to extend Himself and go beyond a nominal level of service. Jesus was generous in His **SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL**. The relationship that Jesus had with His Father could be characterized by what He said: "*I can of my own self do nothing . . . because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me*" (John 5:30). The language which He spoke demonstrated His submission to God, for even as He prayed He always made allowance for "*Thy will be done*" (Matthew 26:42). The life of Jesus was a ful-

fillment of God's mission to the world, primarily to seek and save those who were lost, and in so doing, to honor His Father's will (Hebrews 10:7).

In virtually every area of the life of Christ, He could be found "going the extra mile." Confidence has been given to those who follow Christ, that if they "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" that "*all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33).

Furthermore, we know that "*all things work together for good to them that love God*" (Romans 8:28). This passage promises that when we love God (limitation), things work (operation) together (cooperation) for our good (compensation). Our Lord has not asked that we **die** to prove our love for Him, but that we **live** for Him. "*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your spiritual service*" (Romans 12:1).

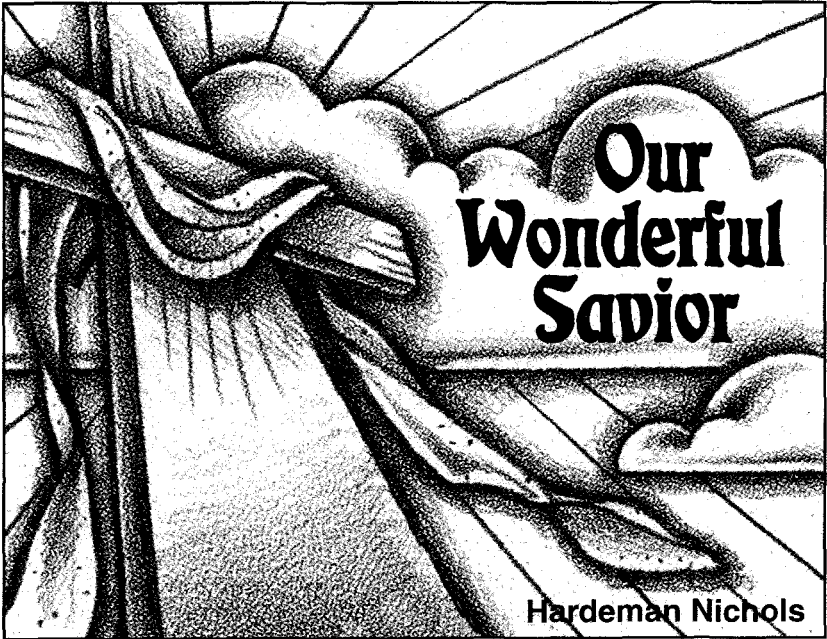
God and Christ have gone far beyond that which is deserved by those of us who are the recipients. It is time now for us to respond as Isaiah of old, "*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me*" (Isaiah 6:8). †

Michael L. King preaches for the Grant Street Church of Christ in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

The Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my Shepherd –
That's **RELATIONSHIP!**
I shall not want –
That's **SUPPLY!**
He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures –
That's **REST!**
He leadeth me beside still waters –
That's **REFRESHMENT!**
He restoreth my soul –
That's **HEALING!**
He leadeth me in the paths
of righteousness –
That's **GUIDANCE!**
For His name's sake –
That's **PURPOSE!**
Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death –
That's **TESTING!**
I will fear no evil –
That's **PROTECTION!**
For Thou art with me –
That's **FAITHFULNESS!**
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me –
That's **DISCIPLINE!**
Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies –
That's **HOPE!**
Thou anointest my head with oil –
That's **CONSECRATION!**
My cup runneth over –
That's **ABUNDANCE!**
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life –
That's **BLESSING!**
And I will dwell in the house
of the Lord –
That's **SECURITY!**
Forever –
That's **ETERNITY!**

– Via the Internet



Standing in the presence of great people leaves one with indelible impressions that last a lifetime; but these pale into insignificance when compared with the awesome reverence one knows from standing in the presence of Christ. This depends, of course, upon first recognizing Jesus and knowing who He really is.

Some who saw Jesus while He was upon earth were not impressed until they became aware of His deity. Even those nearest Him did not immediately hold Him in reverence. His brothers in the flesh were among the unbelieving. They came to Jesus and said, "*Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disci-*

ples also may behold thy works which thou doest. For no man doeth anything in secret, and himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world." John then commented, "*For even his brethren did not believe on him*" (John 7:3-5). They had reduced the familiar to the ordinary. Often it is true: "*A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house*" (Matthew 13:57).

After Jesus was raised from the dead, the evidence of His deity became too overwhelming to deny. From that time, Jesus' brothers did believe and became faithful disciples.

GOD

As the apostles beheld Jesus' mighty works they were filled with awe in His presence. See one of the occasions: "*When he was entered into a boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep, And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?*" (Matthew 8:23-27).

Isaiah prophesied in chapter 52 that Jesus would be "*exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high*" (verse 13). But it would happen only when people looked upon the crucifixion of our Lord and saw that He was not a common criminal, dying for His own sins, but was indeed our Savior, sacrificing Himself for us. Then when they knew of His resurrection, they were amazed.

Isaiah continued: "*Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men)*" (verse 14). There was nothing attractive about the cross as Jesus' mangled body was hanging there, until its purpose was

known; but as people understood its significance, it became a scene of glory.

Even the Centurion in charge of His crucifixion then knew that this was not a mere man. The Bible says that he feared exceedingly, saying, "*Truly this was the Son of God.*"

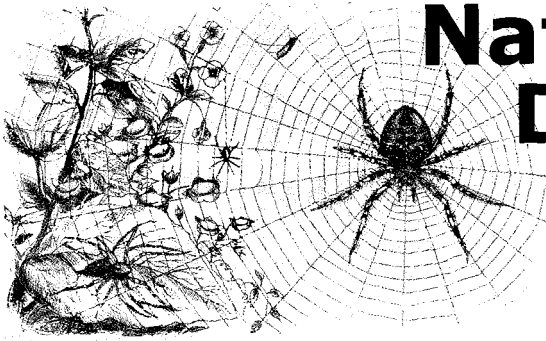
Matthew 27:54 informs us that when those in places of authority learned the truth, they were utterly dismayed. Isaiah had continued, "*...kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand*" (Isaiah 52:15).

All the world should see Jesus as He really is — our loving sacrifice — but He is *much more*. He is our guide and counselor; He is our example in life; He is our hope in death, our friend, and God's Son.

Our wonderful Savior often goes unrecognized by multitudes today. It is not because He lacks the presence or the character of the Son of God, but because men have failed to see Him as He is. Jesus said, "*And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ*" (John 17:3).

Do you really know Him? †

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Nature's Design



Owen D. Olbricht

Within nature are processes that defy the possibility of evolutionary development. Sometimes these have been referred to as “miracles of nature”. Such a reference is made because no scientific information can explain how these processes could develop by evolution. This is true concerning a parasite wasp in its use of the orb weaver spiders in Costa Rica.

William Eberhard, a biologist at the University of Costa Rica and the Smithsonian Research Institute made the following report, which appeared in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, entitled “*Spiders Spin Peculiar Webs at Parasite’s Command*”, by Usha Lee McFarling of the Los Angeles Times, page 2A.

In observing the workmanship of the orb weaver spider Eberhard discovered some amazing facts, as McFarling wrote: “Instead of archetypal rounded and orderly

webs, he found small, rectangular webs attached with unusually strong silken cables. Each disfigured web held a bright orange cocoon in the center.

“Parasitic wasps were using the spiders as day care for larvae.

“An adult wasp would attack a spider and glue an egg onto the victim’s abdomen. The larva would then apparently inject a chemical into the unwitting spider’s bloodstream that somehow triggered the odd web-weaving behavior.

“For what purpose? The super-strength web ‘is in the best interest of the wasp larva’, Eberhard said. In webs with less heavily reinforced lines, larvae might be knocked to the ground in heavy rain.

“The larva attached to the spider drilled holes in the spider and sucked its blood. The spider continued to spin its normal web. On the spider’s final night, it would sud-

EVIDENCES

denly start spinning the strange cocoon web—in response, Eberhard surmised, to the chemical the larva dumped into the spider's blood.

“The spider would work diligently for as much as an hour, making the oddly shaped web. Once done, the spider would sit quietly in the center of its web. Within an half-hour it would be dead, apparently poisoned by the larva. It is unknown how a larva orchestrates this precision timing, or how it even knows when the spider has finished creating the web well suited for the parasite.

“The larva would then suck the spider dry, discard the husk and, all business, spin its own cocoon. In a few days, the wasp would emerge from its cocoon and fly off to find a mate. In a few more days it would return, seeking fresh spider day care for its own young.

“The affected spider alters its web spinning shortly before its death by not adding the adhesive strands that make up the bulk of a normal web. Normally the spiders, which rely on webs to capture prey, also finely adjust tension on web lines by laying lines, checking them and absorbing them if they are too tight or too loose.

“But those affected by parasites omit that step. Webs built solely to support cocoons apparently don't require such fine-tuning.”

Instinctive Design

This process is practiced by the parasite wasps in that area. No good explanation can be given as to how the wasp developed the knowledge that the larva could act on the spider to its advantage, and how the larva would know when and how to affect the spider. According to Eberhard, the larva acts according to some unknown timing.

How did the larva develop the chemical to which the spider reacts to benefit the larva? Why does the spider change its behavior to build a web to help the larva? How could all this develop?

The best explanation is that an all-knowing God built into the parasite wasp and the orb weaving spider these processes.

Design in nature speaks loudly of a Designer. Those who believe that some unknown process brings about design must base their conclusions on some type of faith. The more scientific explanation is that design found in nature is the result of a Designer, an all-powerful, all-knowing God. All other explanations are unscientific and require faith in some unknown process that requires more faith than believing in an intelligent Creator. †

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



Backed into a corner! From every direction we are being constantly bombarded by a secular, evolution-minded world. Any report dealing with the earth, the universe, nature, the animal world, or the human body is written on the foundational “truth” of accepted Evolution. Tenets of basic Evolutionary hypotheses are not raised as questions or points of discussion and conclusion any more, because *Evolution is not now actually taught as a doctrine, or defended as a questioned issue!* Instead, its proponents have traveled past that point and want everyone else to forget that there was ever any question concerning its factualness. In this brave new world, “Evolution” is used as the foundation from which other “facts” and “conclusions” are presented.

In like manner, when reading articles on archaeology, history, or philosophy, wherever the subject matter touches the sphere of Bible, biblical history, Christianity, or any other point having to do with God and His word, He is totally set aside and His book is categorized as myth. As with Evolutionists, secular writers and many religious and philosophical writers have ceased any discussion concerning the authenticity of the Bible and its claims; they, themselves, have concluded that it is merely a compilation of writings and myths put together by men, and so from that foundational level they proceed to discount everything in its pages.

A Christian, facing this constant bombardment to faith, feels backed into a corner. You — I — subtly and continuously are the direct targets of the onslaught of unbelief. *Can all of these scholars be wrong?* Or am I, myself, living by a blind faith? Should I wise up and “go with the flow”?

EVIDENCES

Attempting to be honest with myself, I have asked these questions. In response, I try to place my mind out there with no conclusion, no automatic clinging to faith in God. In neutral, **consciousness of self-existence** is my first realization. I think, “Regardless of the logic and arguments and debates of scholars who think they know it all, *the fact of my own existence has to be dealt with.* I AM HERE. I EXIST. There’s no getting around that fact.”

CONCLUSION NUMBER ONE:

I EXIST!

“So how did I get here? Could Evolution possibly be the answer?” But, wait! — What is this ‘Theory of Evolution’ anyway? It is the belief that life in all its divergent and complicated forms sprang from non-life and evolved over billions of years into the forms we see today. But has anyone actually seen MACRO-EVOLUTION happen? Has science PROVED that it *can happen*? NO! **‘Evolution’ with its entire body of beliefs and doctrines is simply a religion of atheism, parading under the name of science.** Those who believe it do so entirely by faith, trusting that it is true. Because the foundation is unproved, Evolution’s skyscraper of cards is destined to come crashing down.

Did all matter come from non-matter? Did life develop from non-life? Everything in proved and observed science, and in our own experience, denies that either of these can happen. Humans make marvelous things with their genius, talent, labor, and endurance — but not one of these things has come into existence without a maker. If even the simplest creation of man must have a maker, then basic logic insists that the human body — the most complicated and marvelous ‘machine’ in existence — also had to have a creator. There is no way around the fact. *My existence demands a maker* — Whoever He is and whatever name He wears.

CONCLUSION NUMBER TWO:

I OWE MY EXISTENCE TO SOME OUTSIDE FORCE.

“So, I AM HERE. I WAS MADE BY SOMEONE.” These facts silence the haranguing of the Evolutionists. **I don’t have to know everything about their “doctrine” (and it IS a doctrine, and a religion of atheism), and I don’t have to be able to answer all of their hypotheses, because the basic tenet itself doesn’t hold water.** My existence alone

EVIDENCES

establishes the fact of my Maker. Period. Finished. Knowledge to cling to and to build on.

Now, since I am here and Someone made me, “WHO WAS THAT SOMEONE?” It is known that humans — the most intelligent beings — cannot create another human. So the Someone who made us is greater than we are and, therefore, must not be of this world. This Being is beyond our grasp, and any knowledge we have of Him must come from His mind to ours — not from our own minds. Therefore, we have no choice but to look to Spiritual Revelation for our answer.

CONCLUSION NUMBER THREE:

MY MAKER IS OUTSIDE MYSELF, AND GREATER THAN I. THE ONLY WAY I CAN KNOW HIM IS THROUGH HIS OWN REVELATION.

When I begin to think on the question of “Religions”, I am struck forcibly with the fact that AS FAR BACK AS MAN’S HISTORY CAN BE TRACED, EVERY CULTURE HAS REVERED A GOD! That, within itself, is an astounding phenomenon! Why would ALL PEOPLE worship Something or Someone they have never seen? True, in their need to “see” God, they have created myriads of images of Him, and they digressed to the point of worshipping their created images rather than their Creator – but the fact remains that within humans is the innate realization that GOD IS AND THAT HE IS TO BE WORSHIPED!

CONCLUSION NUMBER FOUR:

MY INNATE COMPULSION TO WORSHIP, AND MY CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN AND GUILT, ARE FURTHER EVIDENCES OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND OF MY NEED FOR FORGIVENESS.

So, as I look through the religions that have dominated the world and the minds of humans, which one “rings true” as being from a mind majestic enough to have created all that exists? The ancient religions that have come and gone can be discounted, because logic says that neither the true God nor His revelation would ever cease to exist.

Among current religions there is a wide choice: most are idolatrous in doctrine, some are cultic, others are filled with ridiculous teachings and logic. All “holy” books, of course, contain *some truths*, but the revelation

EVIDENCES

from the one God must contain ALL TRUTH and NO ERROR.

So, for myself, when I place all current religions side by side and consider their portrayals of God, their doctrines, their promises, and their provision for salvation from sin, I am back to where I started! The Bible is such a grand book! Its revelation of the Person and nature of God is so far above anything man could conceive that I must bow my head and heart in submission to His greatness. Its truths are so profound, so different from ideas originating in the mind of humans, that it could have come only from the Great Mind of creation. And the Bible is the only book that reveals a Savior, One of the Godhead who loved His creation so much that He made Himself one with mankind, in order to save us from the guilt that condemns us. No other “holy” book reveals such salvation and such love.

CONCLUSION NUMBER FIVE:

THE BIBLE, COMPARED WITH OTHER “HOLY” BOOKS, STANDS ALONE. LOGIC SAYS THAT I CANNOT SAVE MYSELF FROM THE GUILT OF SIN; ONLY THE BIBLE TEACHES ME OF A SAVIOR, THE SON OF GOD.

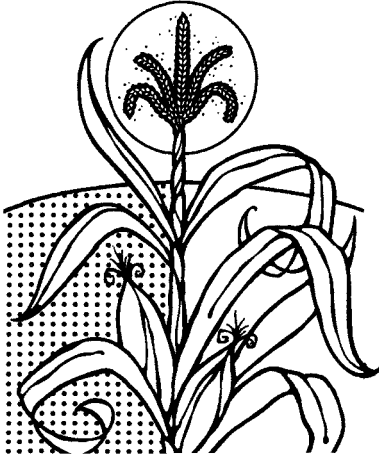
Can I answer all the charges made by Bible critics? No, no more than I can answer all the claims of Evolutionists. No one – not even the critics and the Evolutionists – has all the answers, *but it isn't necessary to know all the answers.* I need only know that *an unproved scientific theory is no basis for faith, and that the limitations of my understanding of God and of His Book have no power to invalidate either.* Throughout history, countless times charges have been made against the accuracy or authenticity of the Scriptures, and countless times the critics have been proved wrong.

The conclusion of my analysis is that I have no choice but to believe and follow God. Though I may not understand everything about Him or about His Book, when careful scrutiny has been made I know that **He is Truth.** I can no more deny Him than I can deny my own existence! My debate has brought me full circle, and has left me with the realization that the very body that houses me is my answer to all the doubts and denials and theories offered by skeptics and unbelievers. **My existence proves God because there is no other explanation for me!** †

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate. They live in Winona, MS but also do mission work in Asia.

The Power Of A Seed

Roy D. Baker



The Anasazi Indians who lived in the four corners area of the United States (now Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico) are best identified for their architectural achievements known today as “cliff dwellings”. They inhabited these homes as early as 130 A.D. Today their remains can be seen in Mesa Verde National Park in Southwestern Colorado. Anasazi beans were one of the few crops cultivated by the Anasazi people. By the year 1300 they had abandoned their settlements, leaving their homeland mysteriously, and had seemingly disappeared into history.

In the early 1900’s, settlers who explored the ancient ruins found a small amount of Anasazi beans, estimated to be from 600 to 1000 years old. These seeds were planted and harvested over a period of years, to the extent that in recent years an industry involving these beans has developed. They are presently grown at 7,000 ft. elevation on the same land the Anasazi inhabited, and are sweeter and more delicious than are pinto beans.

This story illustrates the fact that seeds hundreds of years old can be planted today and produce after their own kind. *Never underestimate the power of a seed!*

Applying this truth to the spiritual realm, those who plant the pure seed of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in our time can expect to produce the Lord’s church whenever and wherever that seed is sown. In Luke 8, Jesus spoke in a parable, “*A sower went forth to sow his seed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Some fell on a rock; and as soon as it sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. But others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold*” (NKJ).

Then His disciples asked Him,

THE WORD OF GOD

“What does this parable mean?”

Jesus answered, “*Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*”

Observe what is written in Deuteronomy 22:9, “*You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.*” Please note that the mixing of seeds will defile the vineyard. This should be a lesson for the religious world in general, and par-

ticularly the Lord’s church. There are those in our time who do not care what kind of seed is sown as long as it pleases the masses. †

Roy D. Baker is Director Emeritus of Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, USA.

The Devil’s Bible

Of course the Devil doesn’t have a Bible. If he did, the following references would be in it:

Popular 6:9 — “Go ahead, everyone else is doing it.”

Cowardly 1:10 — “The best thing to do when the church and its members are criticizing is to keep silent. The critic might get angry with you if you try to defend it.”

Indifference 1:1 — “I’m just too tired after working all day to attend all the services.”

Excuses 1:1 — “I’m afraid to discuss the Bible with others, lest I offend them. Anyway, they won’t listen.”

Foolishness 19:7 — “I’ll try anything once.”

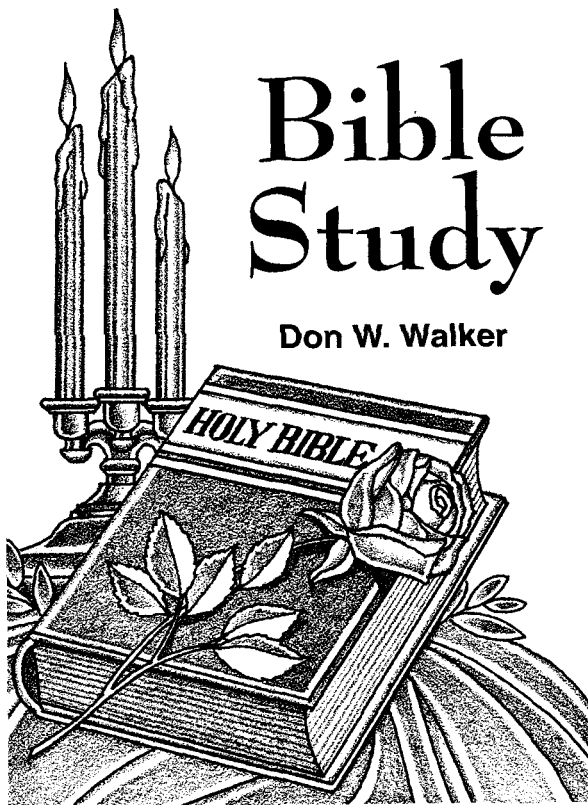
Deceit 8:15 — “It makes no difference what one believes as long as he is sincere.”

Pride 4:7 — “If someone offends you and hard feelings result, let him come and ask your forgiveness. After all, it was his fault.”

Apostasy 2:5 — “What difference does it make whether we follow the New Testament or not?” — **Copied**

Bible Study

Don W. Walker



In Amos 9:11 we read, *"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."* We could not know what Amos was talking about except we turn over to Acts 15 and allow James to explain it for us. James will quote Amos in Acts 15:16,17 and apply the thought to the Gentiles having access to the

salvation of Jesus Christ.

This is but one of the many challenges that await the sincere Bible student. Peter tells us that some things Paul wrote were *"hard to be understood"* (2 Peter 3:16). Note that Peter did not say **impossible** to be understood, but **hard**. With diligence (2 Timothy 2:15) and a proper attitude (Luke 8:18) the truths will be found and understood and will cause the man to prosper.

Bible study is a challenging journey each one of us should follow with sincere hearts. Let us notice what the Psalmist says concerning God's Word. *"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord*

THE WORD OF GOD

are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalms 19:7-10).

God's revelation to man is a blessing indeed. Paul said, "...we were **allowed** of God to be put **in trust with the Gospel**" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). To have divine thoughts recorded for us is a great privilege that God has given to men. Yet, the vast majority will never know the joy of God's Word because they do

not take the time to allow it to speak to them.

Concerning knowledge and wisdom and understanding, the writer of Proverbs says, "*If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God*" (Proverbs 2:4,5). Bible study is a great challenge and joy. †

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When Choices I Must Make

Dear Lord, show me how to wisely use
The knowledge and skills You've given me;
And may the choices I make in my life
Always be the ones You'd like to see.

Show me how to use the skills I've learned
In the most meaningful and effective ways;
And may the decisions I make for myself
Give purpose and fulfillment to all my days.

May You make me ever mindful, Lord,
In everything that I might say or do,
That my knowledge comes from learning. . .
But my wisdom comes from You.

— Barbara Cagle Ray

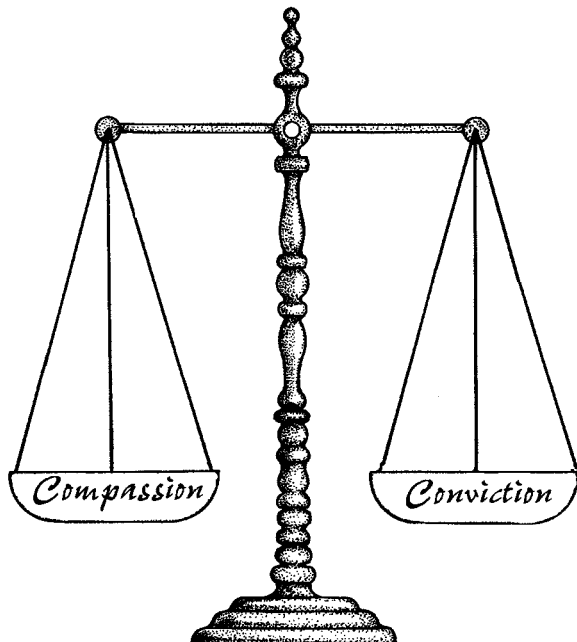
Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the book of Acts, chapter nine, NKJV.

1. What was Saul's attitude toward Christians? (V. 1).
2. Saul asked "_____ from the high priest to the _____ of _____, so that if he found any who were of _____, whether _____ or _____, he might _____" (V. 2).
3. What happened as he was traveling to Damascus? (Vs. 3-9).
4. What was the situation with him in Damascus? (V. 9)
5. Why did Ananias not want to go to Saul? (Vs. 13,14).
6. What did the Lord say He would show Saul? What work was he to do? (Vs. 16,15).
7. What did Ananias tell Saul? (V. 17; 22:16).
8. After his baptism, what did Saul do? (V. 20).
9. When Saul preached convincingly that Jesus is the Christ, what response did the Jews make? (Vs. 22,23).
10. In Jerusalem, Barnabas declared to the _____, how Saul _____ on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and _____ at _____. (V. 27).
11. Describe the church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria after the persecution had ended. (V. 31).
12. Verses 32-35 tell what story?
13. How did Philip answer him? (V. 37).
14. When _____ became sick in _____, the disciples sent for _____ and he _____ her. (Vs. 36-41).
15. "And it _____ all _____, and _____ on the _____." (V. 42).
16. In whose house did Peter stay? (V. 43).

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

Balance:



Ron Bryant

Balance in dealing with people, with projects, or with problems is a desirable possession. Balance is indispensable in the life of the Christian. The proper balance of the traits of **compassion** and of **conviction** is a necessity for faithful and successful ministry.

The apostle Paul possessed a great heart of compassion. He genuinely cared for the lost and the erring. He also possessed deep con-

victions, caring intensely for the will of God. Importantly, Paul was a man of balance and did not allow these two qualities, compassion and conviction, to be in conflict. The result — Paul was an effective servant of the Lord — a faithful and compassionate communicator of God's will, and a great soul-winner. He served the Lord faithfully and he effectively led the lost and erring to Christ.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Balance is still the key to the Christian life and to successful soul winning. Simply stated, there is more to serving God than speaking the truth. The truth of God is to be spoken faithfully, and that is joined with the necessity of "*speaking the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4:15). The truth, the Gospel, is God's power to save the lost. And God is honored in the faithful loving proclamation of His will.

But God is not honored, nor are souls drawn to Christ, through what must be designated "unhealthy compassion." Unhealthy compassion is that action that attempts to compromise truth in order to accommodate men. It is an attempt to throw a mantle of love around the sin of the individual, calling it by another name, ignoring the need of repentance, even setting aside the necessity of obedience to God. Such action leaves souls in sin and dishonors God's love and mercy. When Paul wrote of his ministry, he said, "*We proclaim Him (Christ), admonishing (compassionately warning, pleading, and encouraging) every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ*" (Colossians 1:28).

The servant of the Lord is to be balanced, desiring the will of God and the salvation of the souls of men. Paul's instruc-

tions to Timothy provide many of the details of that balance. He wrote, "*The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will*" (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Paul's counsel and example serve well in identifying and in pointing the way to the balance needed for life and for ministry. †

Ron Bryant is the pulpit preacher for the Camelback Church of Christ in Phoenix, Arizona, USA.

Later Than You Think

Life is paved with good intentions,
Simple things we plan to do —
Like visit with a friend or neighbor;
Everyone should have a few!

Good intentions are soon forgotten
While we're young, and in the pink;
Scatter sunshine along life's pathway,
It may be later than you think.

Why delay until tomorrow
Things that should be done today?
Ask our God to walk beside you;
He can always find a way.

— L. L. Weatherly



Blood Transfusions

Frank Chesser

There are some people who refuse the use of blood transfusions, believing such action to be inconsistent with Biblical teaching. This belief is based on a misunderstanding of both the Bible and the nature of transfusions.

The Bible emphatically forbids the eating of blood. *“But the flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat”* (Genesis 9:4). This prohibition was given with regard to animal blood. Genesis 9:3 allowed the shedding of animal blood in order to provide food of its flesh, but not of its

blood, as stated in verse four. However, in contrast, with regard to man, Genesis 9:6 declares, *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he him.”*

Moses elaborated upon this principle in Leviticus 17:10-15. He restated the law as enunciated in Genesis 9:4 and discussed it in connection with the sacrificial system of Judaism. He emphasized that God had given the blood of animals for atonement purposes and not for human consumption. Such consumption is also forbidden in the

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

New Testament (Acts 15:28,29).

It is clear therefore, that these passages have no connection whatsoever with the life-saving practice of transferring human blood from one person to another. Furthermore, animal blood “dies” when consumed by the human body. Animal blood cannot be transfused into the veins of the human body, for the blood of animals and the blood of humans are not the same kind. However, in transfusing blood of the same type from one human to another, the blood “lives” in the veins of the one who has lost some or much of his own blood through accident or surgery.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). This is true of both humans and animals. Blood *enables* life. That is its God-given purpose. Through transfusions man is using blood to promote life, the very purpose for which it is intended. Instead of blood transfusions being inconsistent with Biblical teaching, they are in perfect

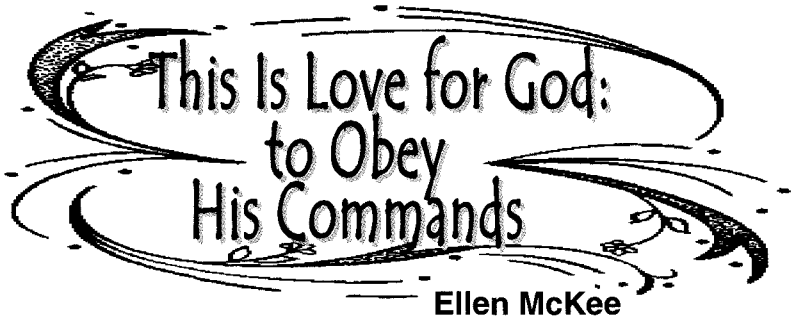
harmony with God’s design. There is a great difference between consuming blood for food and transfusing blood from one person to another in order to preserve the divine gift of life.

This is the very means that God Himself chose in order to promote and preserve the life of a child within the womb. The unborn child is fed intravenously by the mother by means of blood through the umbilical cord. If one declares the use of one person’s blood for the life of another to be sinful, he is obligated to explain why God chose this method for the sustenance of prenatal life.

This fact alone points out the great difference between eating blood, which is contrary to the will of God, and taking transfusions for the actual preservation of life. Eating blood “profanes” life, while blood transfusions “preserve” life. †

Frank Chesser serves as the preacher for the Panama Street church in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

WE TAKE SUCH POOR CARE OF GOOD HEALTH, AND THEN WE TAKE SUCH GOOD CARE OF POOR HEALTH — HOW LONG WOULD WE LIVE, AND WITH WHAT QUALITY OF LIFE, IF WE TOOK GOOD CARE OF GOOD HEALTH?



Throughout the Old and New Testaments God has made it very clear that to be accepted by Him, one must be obedient. Obedience was even required of Christ. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "*Although he was a son, [referring to Christ] he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*"

Noah was obedient to God's commandment to build an ark. God gave instructions as to the building of the ark and, "*Noah did everything just as God commanded him*" (Genesis 6:13-22). Peter says that Noah and his family were saved through water (1 Peter 3:20). The water saved them because of their obedient faith (Hebrews 11:7). Peter also says that this water symbolizes baptism, which now saves us. One is saved through the water of baptism because he is obedient to the Lord's command in Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 and thus comes into contact with Christ's saving blood. Contact with the blood of Christ occurs in the burial of baptism (Romans 6:2-11,17).

Abraham was obedient to all that God commanded him, even to the offering of his own son on the altar of death, because of his faith. He was stopped from killing him at the last moment by the Angel of the Lord. This is certainly one of the greatest examples of obedient faith of all time, or to put it another way, this was a great test of obedience which Abraham certainly passed (Hebrews 11:17-19).

In almost every example of faith given by the writer in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, faith is made parallel with obedience.

The first born of the children of Israel could not have been saved from death in Exodus 12:21-30 if their parents had not obeyed the command to put the blood of a lamb on the top and both sides of the door frame.

Moses was obedient to all that God commanded him, except when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Because of this, he was unable to

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

enter the promised land. God said to Moses in Deuteronomy 32:51 that he couldn't enter Canaan because he and Aaron, "*broke faith with me.... and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites...*"

Samuel told Saul, "*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams*" (1 Samuel 15:22). The kingdom was taken away from Saul and his family and given to another because of Saul's failure to obey (1 Samuel 28:17).

Jesus said in John 14:15, "*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*" Acts 5:32 says that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. 1 John 5:2,3 says, "*This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.*" Thus to love God is to obey him. "*God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of Judgment...*" (1 John 4:16,17). When we truly come to know Jesus and realize what He has done for us, then we will want to obey His Word.

Paul closed the book of Romans saying that the gospel had been revealed, "*so that all nations might believe and obey him*" (Romans 16:25,26). Have you obeyed God's command to be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16)? If you have obeyed Him in baptism, are you "*walking in the light as he is in the light*"? Are you meeting with other Christians each Lord's day and remembering the sacrifice of His blood for your sins (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 20:7)? If you are not living as you know the Lord commands and if you are not in fellowship with other Christians, you need to confess your sins so that you can be forgiven, and thus have confidence in the day of judgment (1 John 1:7-9; 2:3-5; 2 John 5,6). †

Ellen McKee does mission work with her husband in Jakarta, Indonesia.

To These I Commit My Day

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek His grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest. I choose God. — Selected

Can One Who Is A Christian Ever Be Lost?

Jerry Jenkins

The teaching that *once one has been truly pardoned by the Lord there is nothing he/she can do to jeopardize that saved condition* is a consoling doctrine. There is only one problem — it is **not** what God's Word teaches!

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19,20). Note that this passage is addressed to **saved** people, Christians, members of the family of God. We know this because James refers to them as “brethren”. The verse states that one who is saved may “err from the truth”. It is further evident that one in such a condition needs to be converted, and if he is not converted after “erring” from the truth, his soul will die. This cannot be the first death, for *all* will die (Hebrews 9:27). Therefore, the passage must refer to the second death. This second death is described in the Bible

as follows: *“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”* (Revelation 20:14).

These who have so departed can be “converted”. Paul states, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”* (Galatians 6:1). In our effort at restoration, it is helpful to know what caused their fall. It would originate from a number of things, including: (1) discouragement, (2) a lack of spiritual growth, (3) cares of this world, (4) the deceitfulness of riches, (5) the lust of other things, (6) negligence, (7) hurt feelings, (8) being envious of the wicked, (9) pride, or a number of other things.

How are such people to return? By repentance, confession, and prayer. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). *“Repent therefore of this thy*

SALVATION

wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).

God is concerned about His erring children today. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. When the prodigal of ancient times came home, a party was given. This story demonstrates the great concern God has for all of His children who have gone astray.

Will you think seriously of your relationship with God? Will you realize the spiritual famine now in your life and your lost condition away from the fellowship with the church and God? Will you say, as the prodigal of long ago, "I will arise and go to my father"? If you will, there will be great rejoicing in heaven, in your heart, and in your home.

David said, "I thought on my ways, and turned

my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Psalm 119:59, 60). †

Jerry Jenkins preaches the Gospel of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

If I should stumble

*If I should stumble — as I have and will
Oh, let me stumble going up the hill;
Let the stumbling be because my eyes
Were fixed upon some star high in the skies.*

*If I should fall — and I will have my share
Let me fall, going up the stair;
And let me not blame others for the pain,
But quietly arise and try again.*

*If I should stumble, let it be I see
A precious foothold toward a mountain
peak;
Or that I feel the challenge of the pace
Set by fleet runners in life's race.*

*If I should stumble on my little mile,
Help me to make that stumbling worth
the while;*

*To recognize the blocks that fouled my way,
And thus climb better on the coming day.*

— Helen Lawrie Marshall



The New Birth

Albert Gardner

Preaching sermons to large numbers is scriptural, for Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, and Peter preached to a great crowd in Acts 2. Gospel preaching is in the plan of God to save sinners. *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (1 Corinthians 1:21).

But as great as sermons are, not all teaching is to be done by that method. One of the greatest lessons on worship was presented in John 4 to a solitary individual, the woman at the well. This was a quality lesson that would have made a good

“sermon on the mount,” but Jesus taught it to one person.

There could be no greater lesson to be learned than that concerning the new birth. However, Jesus did not save it until He found a crowd, but He taught it to one man.

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, which may mean he was a member of their highest court. His position or status did not exempt him from doing the will of God, for he needed Jesus just as all men do.

In the very beginning of this nighttime visit Nicodemus recognized the divine nature of Jesus by

SALVATION

saying that Jesus “came from God,” and he cited His miracles as proof of it. In response, Jesus came right to the point and told Nicodemus, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3).

The statement was a puzzle to Nicodemus, for he knew one could not enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time that way, so what was the meaning of being “born again”?

Jesus answered, “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). This matter is so important that none of us can afford to be led astray at this point.

What did Jesus mean by “*water and Spirit*”? He referred to **one** birth, but **two** elements. What did He mean by *water*? Under the Old Testament there were washings of different kinds, but under the Christian system, the only thing having to do with water is *water baptism*.

What did He mean by *Spirit*? The Holy Spirit converts sinners when the Gospel, which the Spirit revealed, is preached and sinners believe and obey it. There are no Christians where the Gospel has not been preached. But, as powerful as the Holy Spirit is, He does not make Christians in any way that is separate and apart from the Gospel. Those who believe the Gospel, which was

given by **the Spirit**, and are **baptized in water** have experienced **the new birth**. It is as simple as that!

There are two parts to any birth. First, there is the begetting. Second, there is the bringing forth. In the new birth, we are **begotten** when we believe in Christ. “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*” (John 1:12). When we believe on His name, we are not sons of God, but are given **the power to become** sons of God. At this point we have not been *born*, but we have been *begotten*.

The birth is not *complete* until we are **brought forth** in baptism. Jesus said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). Peter said, “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 3:21). The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to say on Pentecost, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 2:38).

The question is, “Have you experienced the new birth?” †

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Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Romans 6:3,4

This book is addressed to Christians, those who have been Born Again, of water (baptism) and Spirit. The question is asked of "as many of us as have been . . ."

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The baptized believer is raised from the grave of baptism, a new and living soul in the sight of God, to walk henceforth "in newness of life". This new life must be one of faithfulness to God, a life of righteousness as the Christian "conforms to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). He is RAISED for a purpose: to WALK a new life in Christ.

A parallel is drawn:
Baptized | Into Christ
Baptized | Into His death

How do we get "into" Christ?
Through baptism.

How do we get "into" His death, into the washing away of our sins with His blood?
Through baptism.

Baptism is thus bound up with the death of Christ, giving absolute relevance to the fact that it is described as a "burial" — a burial in water, in the likeness of Christ's burial in the earth. No substitution of sprinkling or pouring of water can meet the requirement of Scripture, that the believer who has died to sin be buried with Christ in the grave of baptism.

The believer who has repented of his sinful life (Acts 2:38) and has made the good confession of his faith in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37) has died to sin, but without the burial and the resurrection — baptism — there is no "new life" in Christ!

Christ's Church of the First Century

*(According
to the
New Testament)*



A. L. Franks

1. Built by Christ. Belonged to Christ. Wore the name of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16).
2. Entered by the steps of faith, repentance, and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
3. Taught baptism "*for [unto] the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).
4. Practiced immersion. Baptism involved a "*burial*" (Romans 6:4).
5. Baptized accountable persons. (Capable of hearing, believing, and obeying. See Acts 16:31-34; 22:16).
6. Was the saved. The church of Christ was made up of those saved by Jesus Christ. The Lord added all who were saved to the church. Jesus was/is the Savior of the body, the church (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:23).
7. Was autonomous. Each congregation was independent and self-governing under Christ as the head, the only head. The first century church had no earthly headquarters.
8. Selected qualified men called "elders" and/or "bishops" to oversee and shepherd each congregation (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
9. Appointed respected men to serve as deacons in each church (1 Timothy 3:8ff; Philippians 1:1; See also Acts 6:1-8).

THE CHURCH

10. Assembled on the first day of the week and ate the Lord's Supper on a regular, weekly basis (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20ff).
11. Sang in worship to God. The church of Christ in Ephesus was instructed, "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:19). The practice of Christ's church in the first century was to sing in worship without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments.
12. Heeded the instructions of inspired men of God who taught that the financial needs of churches should be provided by Christians giving "*as prospered*" on the first day of each week (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).
13. Followers of Christ who respected the authority of the Holy Scriptures and who believed in "*speaking as the oracles of God*" — not adding to nor taking from the Word of God (1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 4:11; Revelation 22:18,19).
14. A people who were willing to give their lives for the Christ who gave His life for the church (Examples: Stephen, James, and Paul — Acts 7, 12, 21:13).
15. Followers of Jesus who practiced "*pure and undefiled religion*" — visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and keeping themselves unspotted from the world (see James 1:27).
16. Trusting people who were persuaded that nothing could separate them from the love of God and who had great confidence in the grace of God (Romans 8:36-39; Ephesians 2:8ff).
17. Faithful disciples who believed that life beyond the grave was "*far better*" than life on this earth and who looked forward to "*going to be at home with the Lord*" (Philippians 1:21,23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10).

Are you a Christian? Are you a member of Christ's church? †

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"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

God and Leadership

David Deffenbaugh

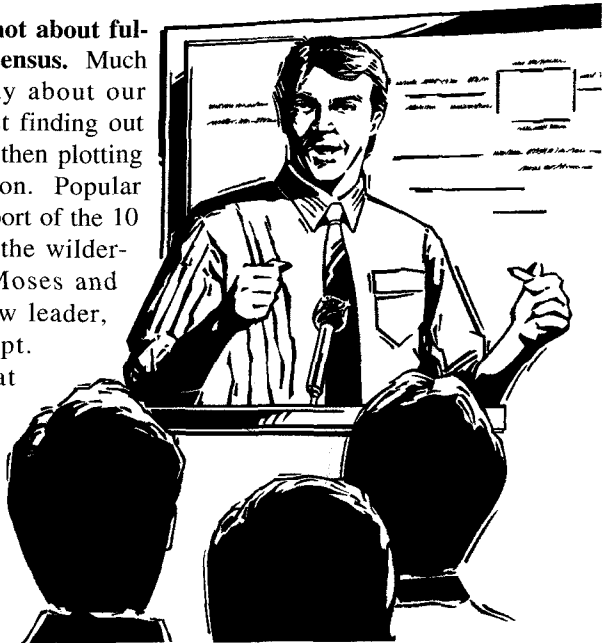
Leadership is important.

How's that for an understatement?

We're concerned for the obvious and visible leadership within government at all levels. We're concerned for the leadership of families. We're concerned for the leadership of the church. To determine the well being of any group of people, just start the analysis at the top. *The leadership sets the tone.*

Perhaps unknown to many people is the fact that some great lessons on leadership, even for the New Testament church, are to be learned from the Old Testament period of wilderness wandering. At the heart of the book of Numbers two incidents, the report of the 10 unfaithful spies, and the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 13,14,16), teach some important lessons on leadership.

Leadership is not about fulfilling popular consensus. Much is being said today about our national leaders first finding out what the polls say, then plotting their course of action. Popular opinion after the report of the 10 unfaithful spies in the wilderness was to kill Moses and Aaron, select a new leader, and return to Egypt. The truth is that sometimes the popular consensus may be precisely opposite of God's will. That is the time for strong, godly leadership to direct His



THE CHURCH

people where they may not necessarily desire to go.

Leadership is not primarily about capabilities. While having qualified leaders is obviously a concern (why else would God reveal qualifications?), having the capability of leading is not primary on the list. When Korah lodged his complaint he observed that all the nation was holy and that Moses and Aaron had no right to exalt themselves above everyone else. The fact is that there may have been others just as capable to lead; Moses and Aaron had not exalted themselves — **God** had.

Today, regarding the fact of male leadership within the church, it is often observed that women are very capable of leading. While that observation is unquestionably true, it is also absolutely irrelevant. God has designated men as elders, deacons, and evangelists. *It is not superior capabilities that is the key issue — **God's designation is.***

One thing that would certainly help leaders is for there to be good followers. Knowing God's intentions regarding leaders, followers ought not to be interested in leaders who will simply give them what they want, but leaders who will guide them where they need to go. †

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What Must I Do to be Saved?

BELIEVE.

Since Christ died for the sins of the world, does that mean that all people will be saved? In John 8:24 Jesus Himself said, "...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

The apostle John said concerning the things He wrote about Christ: "...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

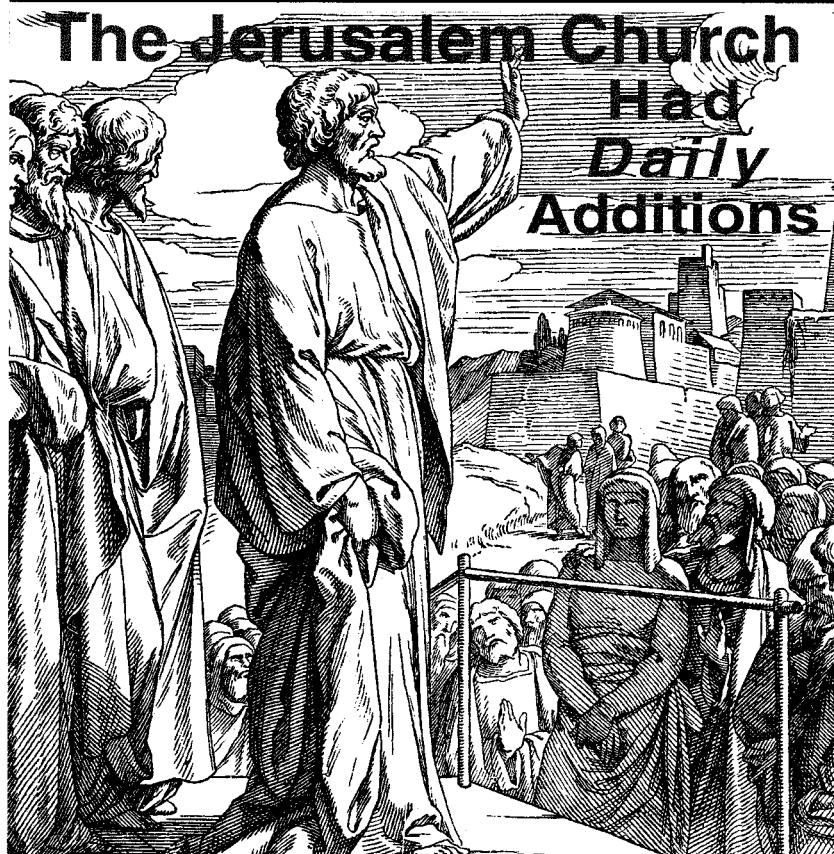
Jesus was not merely *one prophet or one Lord among many*, but He lived and died and was raised from the dead, proving the truth of His claim to be **the only begotten Son of God**. John 3:17 says, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17,18).

But is belief **ONLY** enough?

Next:

What must I do to be saved?

TURN AROUND.



Clayton Pepper

The example of the Savior, His parting and urgent words to His disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, placed the weight of responsibility on their shoulders and the gospel story on their lips until every creature had heard (Colossians 1:23), before their lives had ended upon the earth. A deep sense of urgency characterized the Jerusalem church. Luke writes of them, "*And daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ*" (Acts 5:42). If they had done less it would have been against God's plan to redeem man, against Christ who came to seek and to save the lost, and against lost men. It would have amounted to

CHURCH GROWTH

giving consent for men to be lost. Notice carefully the words “*daily*” and “*ceased not*”. The task of reaching the lost demanded *immediate* attention, *thus evangelism was the first concern* to the Jerusalem church.

This spirit of urgency that caused them to evangelize daily developed from the conviction that men without Christ were lost; the resulting message was, “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...*” (Acts 3:19). Israel’s high court ordered them “*...not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.*” Yet Peter and John said, “*For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:13-20).

DAILY TEACHING BRINGS DAILY RESULTS

A strong, compelling urgency to bring men to the “*...lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29) was sufficient to accomplish the task. Shortly after the church began with 3,000 converts Luke wrote, “*...and the Lord added to the church daily...*” (Acts 2:47).

As men were converted, **the number of workers was increased**. As more Christians taught, **more sinners were converted**. The following passages tell the story of the rapid growth of the early church: “*...the number of the men was about five thousand*” (Acts 4:4); “*Then...the churches... throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria...were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied*” (Acts 9:31); “*And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily*” (Acts 16:5). The rapid growth of the early church was not something that could occur only in the first century. **Any congregation can multiply the number of people being led to Christ by leading more Christians to teach more lost souls more often.**

STEPS TO A DAY-BY-DAY PROGRAM OF EVANGELISM

1. The church today must develop a GREATER PASSION FOR SOULS in order to have the spiritual power to evangelize day by day. John 3:16 has been called the golden text of the Bible. It reads, “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*” Why? That it “*...should not perish but have everlasting life*”. This verse glows with the flame of divine love for a world of lost men. It was this kind of concern that made evangelism first in the Jerusalem church, in spite of warnings and persecutions. Paul’s life and much of his writings also express this kind of compul-

CHURCH GROWTH

sion. After being warned of danger he says, “*What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 21:13). Paul described the weight of his concern for lost Jews by saying, “*...I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh...*” (Romans 9:1-3).

Someone has well said that every footprint in the book of Acts is stained with blood. Therefore, we must conclude that devotion to the will of Christ and a passion for souls is prerequisite to day-by-day evangelism. It has been observed that the test of love has always been the length to which it will go, and that sacrifice — apart from love — is a bitter pill. The church must beware of substitute missions. We have heard of the devalued pound in England and the devalued franc in France. In our day, the devaluation is that of the soul. There is more joy on earth over one new church building than over 99 souls that repent. A preacher who must have a pulpit, a crowd and a dollar to “turn him on” is void of passion for souls.

2. The church today must develop the “EVERY CREATURE” concept of teaching (Mark 16:15; Acts 5:42; 8:4) if it is to see *the need* of day-by-day evangelism. Luke writes of the Jerusalem church: “*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word*” (Acts 8:4).

What effort is being made **today** to practice the “*every creature*” concept of teaching in your community? Have we substituted “*come*” for “*go*”? Have we hired a “*clergyman*” to assume our responsibility to teach the lost? Today men and women within a stone’s throw of our church buildings are dying without the knowledge of the truth because **over 95% of us never personally win a soul to Christ in our lifetime!** If truth is as *great* as we say it is, if truth is the *only thing* that makes men free, why have we so withheld it from lost men? **Are we enemies of the cause we claim to represent?** Unfortunately, most Christians’ commitment to Christ is so limited, it is exhausted at the church building.

3. The church today must have a HOUSE-TO-HOUSE teaching concept if it is to practice **day-by-day evangelism**. The Jerusalem church taught in homes. Paul told the Ephesian elders, “*...I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house*” (Acts 20:20). For a church today to practice day-by-day evangelism it must have *Acts 20:20 vision*. Philip, a deacon in the Jerusalem church, taught the eunuch. Ananias, simply a disciple, taught Paul. Peter taught Cornelius and his household. Paul and Silas taught the

CHURCH GROWTH

jailer and his family. Brother Gatewood suggests in his book **You Can Do Personal Work** that, so far as we know, Jesus only spoke 16 times publicly. It should be noted that most occasions of public teaching mentioned in Acts were to audiences of lost souls, not to Christians. On the average, only about two percent of adults in attendance at our services are not baptized believers.

A survey of Sunday school attendance in America found a decline of eight million from 1970 to 1980. A former head of the Bible department in one of our well known Christian colleges says that, in his judgment, America is usually about 50 years behind England. *Today, two percent of the people in London attend church services and seven percent in England as a whole.*

The story is told of an instance that happened during World War II. France's security rested in the famous Maginot line, supposedly an impregnable fortress. Her troops were stationed in this strong bastion, and she thought she was safe. The only trouble was that the enemy abandoned the sector before this position and skirted around the Maginot line. France was defeated because her troops, safe in their barracks, never engaged the enemy. Wedded to fixed positions, enjoying the luxury of a false security, she was not flexible enough to maneuver. **Every Sunday we attempt to evangelize our community by evangelizing the church building.** We are losing the battle for the souls of men because we are safe in our "barracks" and not out where the battle is taking place for the souls of men.

4. The church today must develop the "EVERY MEMBER EVANGELISM" concept if it is to accomplish its mission. The growth of the early church could not have been achieved by a select group of "professional" workers. The fact that these Jerusalem Christians went everywhere preaching the word when persecution came upon the church suggests that they also taught the word before leaving. Paul wrote to Timothy saying, *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

This passage makes it clear who is to teach others. Many today are under a false illusion. They try to avoid this responsibility by convincing themselves that they will be doing enough to influence others simply by being faithful. The one who shows by his life that he has been with Jesus is assigned the responsibility to teach others, and if he does not want to do so, he needs to examine his life and see whether or not he is faithful in the biblical sense of the word (Acts 4:13). The Hebrew writer said to those who failed to grow spiritually, *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye*

CHURCH GROWTH

have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Hebrews 5:12). Many Christians today ought to be ashamed of themselves for failure to grow and become productive for Christ. Many who now perform only menial tasks could grow and become soul winners. There is no possible way to use the talent of the church apart from “every member evangelism”. *Eighty to 90 percent* is either *unemployed* or *underemployed spiritually*. **Government leaders become concerned when unemployment in the nation reaches six percent. Imagine how concerned God must be with so many people unemployed spiritually, while so many people are lost!** A recent study in communications research finds that the most effective way to communicate a message is on a one-to-one basis and that the effectiveness is further increased when the hearer knows and has confidence in the speaker or teacher. You just cannot improve on the Lord’s way!

5. The church today must have a program of EDIFICATION that will result in MULTIPLICATION if it is to practice day-by-day evangelism. When the early church was *edified*, it *multiplied* (Acts 9:31). This does not mean that they were merely baptizing the members’ children. The church has moved through the age of the “brush arbor” and “tent meeting” days when large numbers of lost people came to mass meetings where the gospel was preached. We all know that that time has passed. The church must be alert to the changing times and attitudes of people if it is to meet its responsibility to evangelize. It must find new methods to evangelize, and use them.

There is a story of a young man in the “cave days” who was very concerned because the family barely had enough food from day to day. He sat by the fireside at night and thought and pondered a solution. Finally, he came upon the idea to get together all the men who knew the most about fish-grabbing, horse-clubbing and keeping the saber-tooth tiger away, and start a school for all the boys to attend as they grew up. This was done, and it became a very prominent part of every boy’s training. Finally, a glacier came in from the north. The streams became muddy, the horses and the moist climate left, and the saber-tooth tiger died out. The bear and the antelope then came in. One young man learned how to make a seine of vines and was catching more fish in one day than his family could use in several days. Another learned how to make a snare to catch the antelope. Another learned how to dig holes and put camouflage over them, so the bear would fall in, and they could kill it. These men began to advocate that the school should be changed since conditions had changed. But the older profession-

CHURCH GROWTH

als called them radicals and restated that if a boy were not trained in the art of fish-grabbing, horse-clubbing and keeping the saber-tooth tiger away from his cave, he just was not properly trained... You can see the point. We are studying a curriculum that is not giving Christians the skills or working knowledge and the motivation to go teach the lost who are not at our services. The same can be said of our preacher-training for the most part. It prepares men almost exclusively for public preaching in a church building, as though we could reach the world in this way. We are still following the “saber-tooth tiger” curriculum, but the times have changed. Every Christian must be taught and given opportunity to grow to the fullest extent of his ability, both in teaching publicly and from house to house.

Ask yourself, “How many soul winners is our present curriculum producing? Why is it that our Bible schools hardly produce enough teachers to perpetuate themselves? Why do such a few want to preach the gospel?”

The adult Bible class program must become a school of evangelism, a place to prepare the Church for the accomplishment of her mission. The day of getting the lost to the building and keeping them in a Bible class long enough for them to finally obey the gospel has passed, except for a very few rare cases. If you doubt this, simply count the adults who are not members, who come to Bible school, and try to imagine all those who do not come.

CONCLUSION

The early Church had more Christians teaching more sinners more often — and more people were converted. We have less Christians teaching less sinners less often — and we have less people being converted.

There are 8,760 hours in one year. If 10,000 Christians in my county gave two hours per week to soul winning, it would amount to 1,040,000 hours per year or nearly 119 years. Or, increase the number of workers to 20,000 and you would have about 238 years. If one soul was won for every 30 man-hours of work — and this seems possible— it would amount to 69,000 converts per year.

This much time is lost because we are not doing it. The writer saw eight men in eight months, practicing New Testament evangelism, convert more to Christ than a congregation of 500 members and twice as many as a congregation of 400 members who were not practicing day-by-day and house-to-house evangelism. What is the logical conclusion about those who will not practice it? †

Clayton Pepper, long-time promoter of church growth, works with Restoration Network International in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.



TRAINING TO TEACH

Why Do You Immerse for Baptism?

Jane McWhorter

Most Christian women, at one time or another, have been asked by their friends why baptism is done only by immersion within churches of Christ, while so many religious bodies practice sprinkling.

It is suggested that you use a miniature chain reference system in keeping scriptural answers at your fingertips. In the front of your Bible, write the words Baptism/Immersion. Under those two words make note of the first reference, **John 3:23**, which tells us that John chose a particular location for baptisms because there was *much water* there. In the margin beside this verse, write **Matthew 3:16**, which reveals that Jesus went up straight-way *out of the water* when He was baptized. The next notation should be the story of Philip and the eunuch, **Acts 8:36-39**. While reading these verses with your friend, call attention to the fact that *both* Philip and the eunuch went down *into* the water for the baptism and then they came up *out of the water*. From this passage turn to **Romans 6:4**, which speaks of baptism as a *burial*. This concept is taught again in **Colossians 3:12**, which also includes the symbolism of *a resurrection to a new way of life*.

By way of summary, these references should be studied: John 3:23, Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:36-39, Romans 6:4, and Colossians 3:12. In all of

TRAINING TO TEACH

these passages, the evidence points only to immersion.

It is wise to always have a small notebook with you for added information on various subjects. Make note of the fact that the original Greek word for baptize is "*baptidzo*", which means to dip, plunge, submerge, or immerse.

If we believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, the passages listed earlier, along with the original meaning of the Greek word "*baptidzo*", should be sufficient. However, you might also note what some religious leaders have said on this subject:

Martin Luther ("Father of the 16th century Reformation," founder of the Lutheran Church): "The term 'baptism' is a Greek word; it may be rendered into Latin by 'mersio' — when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water."

John Calvin (16th century reformer, a founder of the Presbyterian Church): "The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse and the rite of immersion was practiced by the ancient church."

John Wesley (founder of the Methodist Church): "Buried with him — alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion."

Edinburgh Encyclopedia: "In the time of the apostles the form of baptism was very simple. The person to be baptized was dipped in a

river or vessel."

Catholic Dictionary: "In Apostolic times the body of the baptized person was immersed, for St. Paul looks on the immersion as typifying the burial with Christ, and speaks of baptism as a bath."

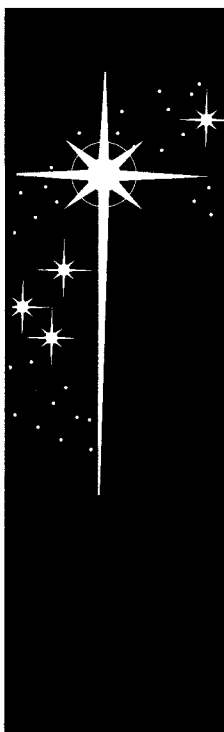
Catholic Encyclopedia: "The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion. This is not only evident from the writings of the Fathers and the early rituals of both the Latin and Oriental churches, but it can also be gathered from the Epistles of St. Paul."

The above quotations have two things in common: (1) They all define baptism as *immersion*: (2) They are from members of churches which have substituted *sprinkling or pouring for immersion*.

Since immersion was the practice of the early church, when did the change occur? The first recorded case of baptism by sprinkling was in 251 A.D., when a man by the name of Novation was sick in bed. At first it was the exception to the rule because it was administered only to the sick, but sprinkling finally became the accepted practice and was legalized in 1311 A.D. by the Catholic Church.

Without a doubt, immersion is the only biblical baptism. †

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Christians in Europe suffered dreadful punishments for their faith from the 1100s onwards. This was during the reign of paranoid governments. An unholy alliance existed between the Catholic Church and the rulers of Europe. In an environment of supposed intrigue, those wishing to obey the gospel were considered *by the secular authorities as subversives* and *by the Catholic Church heretics*. It was still several centuries until the Americas would be settled. By the 1600s many religious outcasts would flee to that new world for religious freedom but, until then, there was simply **nowhere to run**.

Nowhere to Run

Keith Sisman

Those accused of subversion or heresy, who had wealth or were in positions of power, were in even more dangerous and difficult situations because both the Catholic Church and the State would prosecute in unison, often on trumped-up charges, in order to gain easy conviction followed by swift punishment: normally, execution by burning alive. Lands and possessions then became the property of the church or state.

Sir John Oldcastle, Knight, Lord of Cobham, one of the most powerful Englishmen of his period, was also a Christian. He was roasted alive by the State after being found guilty of charges brought by the Catholic Church. It has been stated by Catholic historians that Oldcastle was a subversive, being involved in a rebellion. If that had been the case, the punishment would have been hanging, drawing, and quartering, said to be more painful than being burnt alive. Burning was for heretics, but he was both hanged, drawn, and burnt, showing that his crime was both being a subversive and a heretic. It is likely that the charge of subversion was invented, as there is no reputable evidence that he was violent.

As a young man, Sir John's parents were sufficiently wealthy to afford him an education. He became a professional soldier, and a good one. He

CHURCH HISTORY

fought well against France and earned his knighthood for his services there. In 1406 he was awarded a pension of forty pounds a year, a considerable sum in those days. Later, after leaving the military and returning to his family home in Olchon Valley, Wales, he learned of the true faith and was baptised in the brook that runs through the valley.

in addition to his recognition as a knight: Sir John Oldcastle (Knight), Lord Cobham.

As a Lord, Sir John had the right to sit in Parliament. During 1410 he helped pass a law which stated that heretics, whilst under arrest, had to be imprisoned by the State, rather than by the Catholic Church. This was a blow to the power of Catholicism, which then became very con-

In the Black Mountains of Wales, small groups of Christians were able to hold onto their faith with little interference from the outside. In the Olchon valley they had their own building, situated on the side of a mountain, half cut into the rock. Here they would meet in safety, hidden from the world. It was among these people that John Oldcastle learned of the true faith.

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Sometime later he married into the nobility, taking for his wife Joan, heiress of the Cobham estate in Kent (1408). Through this connection he wore the title of Lord, in

cerned about Oldcastle.

Sir John, in his private activities as a Christian, was responsible for the training and keeping of many travelling preachers. Being a wealthy man he could afford this expenditure, but his support of the preaching of the gospel created even greater enmity on the part of the Catholic hierarchy.

Whilst King Henry IV lived, Oldcastle was safe for they were good friends. When Henry died in 1413, the crown was handed on to his son, Henry V, and the Church took opportunity to act. In 1414

CHURCH HISTORY

Oldcastle was charged with being party to an uprising, which was a false accusation. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London by the constable Sir Robert Morley, but he escaped, returning to his family home in Wales. He was outlawed and was now branded as a traitor. He was seized three years later, taken to London and handed over to Morley in the Tower.

On December 15, 1417 Sir John Oldcastle was publicly executed in the fields near to Lincoln's Inn, now part of modern-day London. Stripped of his rank, he was bound for his execution. He

actually carried out the execution, it was the Catholic Church that had originally brought the charges which led to the prosecution. Without the intervention of the Catholic Church it is unlikely that Sir John Oldcastle would have been found guilty of any charge. The Catholic Church washed its hands of the execution, as it did with many others which followed but, like Pilate, it was no less responsible for what happened.

With one of the leading men of the kingdom dead for his religious beliefs, the Catholic Church knew that it now held the upper hand. Regardless of their position in soci-

He was drawn (castrated and stomach cut open), hanged between two gallows by metal chains (for being a traitor) and then slowly burnt to death (for heresy). Throughout this appalling ordeal he constantly prayed, staying steadfast to the end.

kneeled and prayed publicly for his enemies and proclaimed to those watching the need to obey the scriptures and them only. He was drawn (castrated and stomach cut open), hanged between two gallows by metal chains (for being a traitor) and then slowly burnt to death (for heresy). Throughout this appalling ordeal he constantly prayed, staying steadfast to the end.

Whilst the secular authorities

ety, those seeking separation from the Catholic Church could and would die horrible public deaths.

Christians were often discovered by their absence from Catholic services. The village constable would visit absentees. If there was good reason for their missing services, such as illness, they were excused. If they were found, though, to have left the Catholic Church, accusation and punishment

CHURCH HISTORY

This congregation is interesting on three accounts;

1. It met prior to the continental Anabaptists who date their appearance to January 21, 1525.
2. It is pre-Reformation 1517.
3. It is pre-English separation (1596).

would come quickly.

Small congregations all over England were found like this, often just one or two families. In 1457 the Chestertown, Cambridge congregation was discovered. This congregation is interesting on three accounts:

1. It met prior to the continental *Anabaptists who date their appearance* to January 21, **1525**.
2. It is *pre-Reformation*, **1517**.
3. It is *pre-English separation*, **1596**.

This congregation met separately from the Catholic Church in their member's homes. It consisted of six people, primarily two families. They practised immersion for remission of sins and were congregational. They had no separate clergy. Gray, lord Bishop of Ely, complained in 1457 of the existence of this congregation meeting in Chestertown, modern-day Chesterton, a suburb of Cambridge, about ten

minutes' walk from the town centre of Cambridge. This congregation of believers was severely persecuted. Whether they continued or not, we don't know. But the same (or another) congregation was known to be meeting there fifty years later. Another group of Anabaptists was arrested at Ely on April 3, (Easter Sunday) 1575, a hundred years later than the Chesterton congregation.

During this period of time Christians were burnt at Smithfields, London, Ely, Cambridge, Coventry, Canterbury, Lewes, Colchester, Stratford-le-Bow, Newbury, Exeter, Wymondham, Uxbridge, Brentford, Beccles, Westminster, Tower hill, Ipswich, Rochester, Norwich, Edinburgh, Litchfield, Buckingham, Ashford, Malden, Cardiff, Wisbech.

The last man burnt for his religious convictions was Edward Wightman of Burton-upon-Trent. He was convicted, on December 14, 1611, of heresies, including being a member of the Lord's church and preaching against infant baptism. He was burnt at Litchfield on the

CHURCH HISTORY

11th April 1612, two hundred and eleven years after William Sawtre was burnt for the same offences. †

Keith Sisman preaches at the Church of Christ in Ramsey, England. Having been given permission to use the ancient Cambridge Library, and the British Library, London, where he has a permanent research pass, Keith is doing extensive research and writing on the records he is finding concerning the church in Europe, particularly in England. He can be contacted at Keith@Sisman.net.

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"When you are in the minority"

During the time Noah was building the ark, he was very much in the minority — but he won.

When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, he was a decided minority — but he won.

When Gideon and his 300 followers, with their broken pitchers and lamps, put the Midianites to flight, they were an insignificant minority — but they won!

Jesus said that "the few" would be on the narrow way to heaven — but we will win! — Selected

Reminder of the Terms of Agreement

Tom Steed



“Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words’”
(Exodus 24:8).

Enter into an agreement with God? Seems strange, doesn't it? A covenant is an agreement between two parties. At Mount Sinai, there was an agreement made between God and man. Naturally, God was the one who was dictating the terms of the agreement, but God also allowed man to have a part. The

people cried: *“Everything the LORD has said, we will do”* (verse 7). Burnt offerings and fellowship offerings that cost the lives of young bulls were sacrificed. Half of their blood was caught in bowls and the other half was sprinkled on the altar. The people then ate a fellowship meal with God. The blood that

WORSHIP

was shed, making this meal possible, was called “*the blood of the covenant.*”

Then Moses went up on Mount Sinai with God. He returned and presented the terms of the agreement between God and man. The terms were written on tables of stone — The Ten Commandments. Israel was to keep the commandments. When they did, blessings came from God; when they did not, curses and punishment resulted.

When God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, He instituted a fellowship meal, the Passover meal. A lamb was sacrificed, blood was sprinkled over the doorpost, and a meal was eaten. When the angel of death came through, those in the houses marked with blood were spared.

When it came time for the New Covenant, Jesus instituted a fellowship meal with His disciples. The setting was the Passover meal, therefore the imagery called to mind the offering of the Passover lamb and the blood. In this context, Jesus entered into a new covenant or agreement with His people. “*Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’*” (Matthew 26:27,28). The fruit of the vine, of which Christians

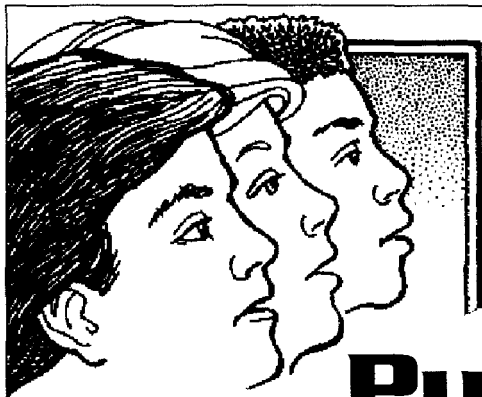
partake each week, reminds us of the sacrifice of the life of Jesus and the agreement that we entered into with Him. Jesus is the instigator and the principle party.

Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:25), “*In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*”

The communion service each week reminds worshipers of the sacrifice of Christ. It reminds us of the covenant or agreement that we have with Christ. And it shows the world that we believe that Christ will come again. The covenant is an important one: it was sealed with the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 13:20 states, “*May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of their sheep, Equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*” †

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Sunny David

The Purpose of Singing in Worship

As Christians, members of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we come together each first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to worship God. Christ said, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). The Apostle Paul said, *“I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding”* (1 Corinthians 14:15).

As Christians, in the worship of God we partake of the Lord’s supper, give of our means, study from God’s word, pray, and sing. For our wor-

ship to be acceptable to God, we must do all of these things in spirit and truth and with understanding. Nothing is to be done to show one’s talents or to entertain self or others. We worship *God*, who sees both the outer and inner person, and not like man who is pleased with only outside.

In worship of God we are not the audience or the spectators. But each one of us — every Christian man and woman — actively concentrates his thoughts and heart on God, to whom the worship must be rendered.

Keeping these fundamentals in mind, let us view the importance of singing in the worship of God.

WORSHIP

Ephesians 5:19 says, "*Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*" Colossians 3:16 says, "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*"

according to the teaching of God's word, which is the *truth* (John 17:17). We must realize that the songs we sing from our song books were written by men and women, who were humans, just as we are. They were not perfect. They were not inspired to write by the Holy Spirit of God, as the apostles were (John 14:26; 16:12,13). They did

So why should we sing in worship? Certainly to praise God and to teach and to admonish one another; not to entertain one another or to out-do one another with our singing abilities, but to teach and admonish one another.

So why should we sing in worship? Certainly to praise God and to teach and to admonish one another; not to entertain one another or to out-do one another with our singing abilities, but to *teach and admonish one another*. This is precisely the reason why there should be no solo singing, or a choir, to perform in the assemblies of the church, because God has ordained that we all sing in order to praise Him and to teach and admonish one another, but not to perform to entertain one another.

When we sing in the worship of God it should come from our hearts, that is, our spirit; our inner person must be involved in singing. True worship goes deeper than just be the words of our mouths and lips.

Also, our songs must be

their best, and many of the songs they wrote are beautiful, wonderful, and inspiring. Their messages teach great spiritual lessons, and I believe many song leaders make a mistake by singing only the first and the last lines or stanzas of each song they lead. That is like reading only the first and the last lines of an important letter! Yet, we should remember that most of the song writers were men and women from various denominational backgrounds. They could believe and teach error, just as any other person. Therefore, says Paul, when I sing, I will sing with the spirit, but I will also sing with the understanding. We must understand what we are singing. The song leader should go through the songs carefully before he gets up to

WORSHIP

lead the congregation in singing. Remember, we are to teach and admonish through our singing. But we can also teach error and false doctrine if we do not understand the words of the songs.

For instance, one writer who wrote many very popular songs believed in the doctrine of "rapture". It contradicts on all points what the Bible teaches about the second coming of Christ, the one resurrection of

Christ on earth!

Many believe in this false doctrine of "rapture", and so did the writer of the song who said, "Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight." In another popularly sung song she wrote, "In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river." This is teaching and admonishing the false doctrine of rapture.

If we want to teach only the truth, we need to make a change in songs that teach error.

all souls, and that all of His saints will meet Him in the air from where they will go and live with Him forever (John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:10). Instead, the doctrine of rapture teaches a secret coming of Christ, and secret catching away of the church, both the living and the dead, leaving all others on earth for a seven-years' tribulation period. This doctrine, without any biblical basis, says that the saints will live with Christ in the air for seven years, after which they will come to earth to reign for 1,000 years. Then there will be another resurrection of the dead saints, who had died during the seven years period of tribulation, and then yet another resurrection to follow after the completion of 1,000 years reign of

Now, if we want to teach only the truth, we need to make a change in such songs. Perhaps the more scriptural wording could be: "Perfect submission, perfect delight, Since I am walking in Jesus' light; Angels are singing heaven above, echoes of mercy whispers of love...." Also, in the song "Jesus, keep me near the cross..." in the chorus where Fanny J. Crosby says, "In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever; Till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river" perhaps we should sing something like this: "Till my blessed soul shall find rest beyond the river."

It is never too late to change. †

Sunny David is the Hindi Radio speaker in New Delhi, India.

A Simple Strategy for Evangelism

Wayne Barrier

Most Christians understand that the mission of the church is to see that every person has the opportunity to obey God. Few argue with accepting Matthew 28:18-20 or Mark 16:15-16 as statements of the mission of the church. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus says, *"...all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

The question that we often ask is, "How do we succeed in completing this mission?" This question has resulted in the planning and implementation of scores of evangelism, missions, outreach, and other programs designed to reach and teach the untaught. Still, most in the world today are not believers and relatively few are New Testament Christians. Many of our methods and approaches are good and sound. I would like to suggest

some things to consider as we use our various methods of "going and teaching."

Jesus often had opportunity to teach large crowds of followers. What did He do and say? A review of some references to Jesus teaching the multitudes reveals some common principles. Consider Matthew 4:23, Matthew 9:35, and Luke 9:11. There seems to be three common, simple things that Jesus did as He taught in these situations.

First, He was approachable, and the people knew they were welcome

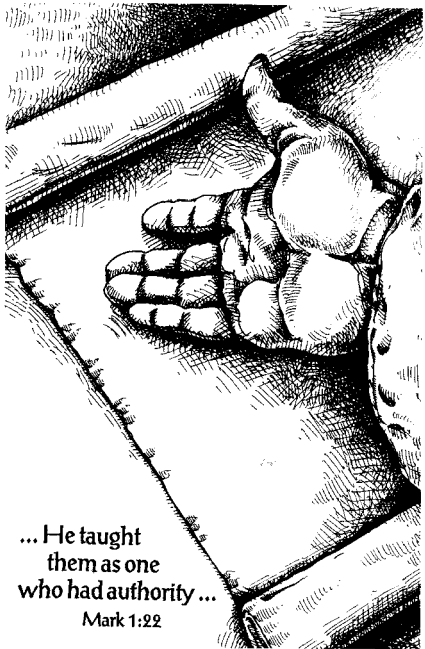


CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

to come to Him. The apostles often wanted to send the crowds away. If other plans had been made, if circumstances were not good for the gathering, if the time was not convenient, etc., the apostles would suggest that the people be sent home. Jesus welcomed them, received them, and encouraged them to be there. Consider Luke 9:11. *“But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them.”* We must be careful that those we desire to teach know that we genuinely care about them. Sometimes we show “respect of persons,” or seem to be acting totally out of a sense of duty, rather than love and compassion. Today, Christians are ambassadors of Christ and must present themselves just as Christ did.

Secondly, Jesus *“taught them about the kingdom of God.”* This teaching sometimes took long periods of time and refuted the religious beliefs of those listening. Jesus could still effectively teach them because of His attitude of compassion, love, and genuine concern. Everyone did not always accept Him, but He was effective with the multitudes. He did not compromise or distort the truth about the kingdom. Seeking first His kingdom would demand obedience, sacrifice, trials, suffering, and self-denial (Luke 9:23-26; James 1:2,3).

Christ knew that obedience and service in His kingdom was man’s only hope (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; Acts 2:38). To be added by the Lord to the kingdom would require obedience (Matthew 7:21; Acts 2:47). Christ knew the price to be paid for man’s salvation (1 Peter 1:18,19). We must teach men about the kingdom, approaching the subject from the same perspective as Jesus did. The kingdom (church) is the only refuge for the soul in a world influenced largely by Satan, and one can escape the bondage of sin and Satan and be saved in the kingdom.

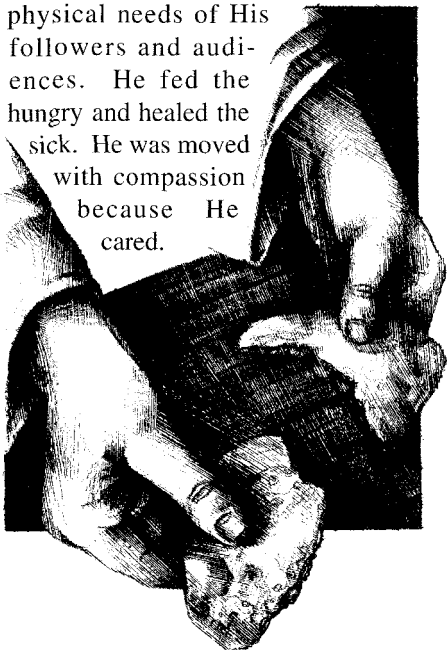


... He taught
them as one
who had authority ...

Mark 1:22

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Finally, Jesus attended to the physical needs of His followers and audiences. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. He was moved with compassion because He cared.



He did what He could to help. We should do likewise. The apostles wanted to send them home. We sometimes are the same. We can help those among us who need basic care. We help as we teach. If we are not compassionate, tender, kind, feeling, caring people, we are not of Christ. Our "trade-mark" today in the church may not be the right one (John 11:1-5).

We should discipline ourselves to grow and become more like Jesus every day. We too can reach the multitudes with the message of everlasting salvation and hope. †

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA., and is involved in teaching the Gospel in many different countries of the world.

Live for Today

*I'll never see this day again, the seconds or the hours.
Now's the time to take the time to stop and smell the flowers.
Today's the day to give that smile and happiness away.
That you were saving for a friend some rainy, gloomy day.
This day is golden, priceless, God made this day for you.
The deed you do for someone else may just come back to you.
So touch a heart, hold a hand, call a lonely friend.
Don't postpone the love you have; this day won't come again.*

— Anonymous

A Simple Method of Teaching The Lost

Jack Harriman

When I have opportunity to study with someone who believes the basics but has not understood and obeyed the Gospel, I follow **this four-step plan.**

First, I establish the fact that we live under the New Testament and not the Old Testament, and the significance of that fact. The Old Testament was a covenant made exclusively between God and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:12,13; Psalm 147:19,20). The Gentile world was never under this covenant, and even the Jewish world, since the death of Jesus, is no longer under it. So, we must get our instruction from the New Testament.

Second, I establish a “common sense” approach to Bible study. This involves two things. All the facts pertaining to a subject must be gathered. For example: When the guards came to arrest Jesus, Mark says that one of those who stood nearby drew a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest. Matthew informs us that it was a disciple of Jesus who

used the sword. Luke says that it was the right ear that was amputated. John identifies the swordsman as Peter and the victim as Malchus.

Having gathered all the facts, the student must reason accurately regarding them. Any Bible subject may be approached in this way.

Third, I apply this to the question of how and when one becomes a saved person by studying the great commission accounts. Matthew says one is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (28:19). Mark says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved (16:16). Luke adds the elements of repentance and remission of sins (Luke 24:47). So, one becomes a Christian when he believes the Gospel, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of sins.

Fourth, I confirm this conclusion by a brief study of Acts 2. Those people heard the Gospel and believed it (verses 14-37). When they asked what else they should do, they were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins (verse 38).

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

I emphasize two things about believing, repenting, and being baptized. **First, they stand together as a unit.** Not one of these can be omitted and still result in the remission of sins.

Second, there is a logical progression from faith — to repen-

tance — to baptism — to salvation, which progression has been distorted by some of our religious neighbors.

Question! Where are you in your obedience? †

Jack Harriman is a gospel preacher working with the Center Street church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.



Judgment

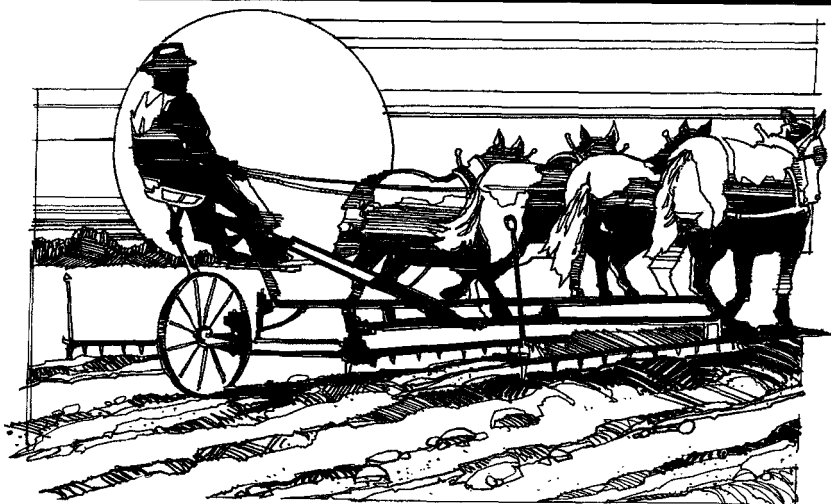
"I just don't understand it!"
He was speaking soft and low,
"I've believed this other doctrine
for forty years or more."

Is it really so surprising,
That one be led astray,
By "...every wind of doctrine..."
Taught by men today?

When one turns from the Bible,
And rejects God's Holy Word,
There is nothing then to save him
From the judgment of the Lord.

I am thankful for the blessing
Of teaching heaven's truth
To all who will but listen,
Both the aged and the youth.
And the joy the Father gives me,
Each time a soul obeys,
Is an early taste of heaven,
Leading to the judgment day.

— Charles R. Rose



God, Please Fill My Barns with Plenty

Proverbs 3:9,10

Demar Elam

“Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increases; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine.”

People want God to bless their lives and fill their barns with plenty, yet many of the individuals desiring these blessings have failed to listen to God regarding the things to be done in order to receive His bounty. Man is instructed to *“Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first-fruits of all your increase.”* Why do such a thing? *“So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine!”*

God has promised the man who gives to Him of his possessions a full barn! Listen to God’s promise and the challenge He gave man for testing Him in Malachi 3:8-10. *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there*

may be food in My house, And prove Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

Note also the words of Jesus, *"Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again"* (Luke 6:38).

What is the key to prosperity? Please note that Jesus said, *"Give, and it will be given to you"* (Luke 6:38). He did not say, "Give and it **might** be given unto you." Jesus promised us something in this verse. The question is, can God fulfill His promise? The extent to which we answer that question can be measured only by our FAITH!

Let's quickly analyze Luke 6:38. **First**, we are commanded to give! **Secondly**, Jesus states, *"It will be given back to you."* **Thirdly**, not a legal measure was to be given back, but it was to be running over. **Fourthly**, the standard we use in giving is the standard God will use to bless us. We, ourselves, determine how abundantly God blesses us! †

Demar Elam is Director of World Missions, Southern Christian University, Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Isn't It Funny?

Dick Marcear

- ◆ Isn't it funny how big twenty dollars looks when you take it to worship, but how small when you take it to the grocery store?
- ◆ Isn't it funny how much effort it takes to read a chapter or two from the Bible every day, but how easy it is to read the newspaper?
- ◆ Isn't it funny how much of a sacrifice it seems to spend an hour worshipping God, but so easy to spend an hour watching TV?
- ◆ Isn't it funny how easy it is to talk to your friends about your views on politics, but how hard to speak about your faith in Christ?
- ◆ Isn't it funny how difficult it is to work a special meeting of the church into your schedule, but how easy it is to work in a social function?
- ◆ Isn't it funny how easy it is to teach your children how to play ball, but how difficult to teach them to pray, to grow spiritually, or to obey the gospel?
- ◆ Isn't it funny how easy it is to talk with a friend on the phone for hours, but how difficult it is to have anything to say after 2 minutes to God in prayer?

I wonder what these things say about us? Do you think God thinks these things are funny?

Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God..."*

Christians Are to be Known for Their Love

Peter Mostert



It is well known that people respond to how they are treated, and that people are treated in the way that they, themselves, think they deserve. Let me explain. First, the best way to have someone respond to you with kindness is to first show that person kindness. Similarly, God calls on people to love others — this is based on the knowledge that He first loved us. Second, people consciously, or subconsciously, advertise how they want to be treated by the way they dress, speak, or act. Someone might say, “I don’t understand why people don’t like me!” The reason may be simple — his or her behavior is not attractive.

One thing I have found in life is that people are very forgiving and will overlook virtually anything in order to be with others who make them feel good. This means that if I have been living the life of selfishness and then make a genuine change, people will overlook my past.

The Bible speaks very plainly about forgiveness. God forgives people and expects them to forgive too. This is such an important attitude that Jesus teaches us to say, “*forgive us as we forgive others.*” A lack of forgiveness may come from anger. From time to time people become angry at various injustices done to self or others. The Bible says, “*be angry and sin not,*” and “*do not let the sun go down on your anger.*” A person must be careful why he allows himself to become angry. James says, “*be slow to anger*” for “*man’s anger does not achieve the righteousness of God.*” Solomon said it plainly that “*anger resides in the lap of fools.*” It is one thing to become angry with what God becomes angry with, another to be angry over personal desire.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

One cannot speak of love and remain unforgiving and angry. Love is demonstrated in acts of kindness. Could Paul have converted members of the Roman guard while calling out for personal justice and vindication? No! Could Jesus have saved the world if, while hanging on the cross, He cursed His accusers, executioners, and the thief by His side? No! The Bible says, according to Paul's writing, that God loved us while we were sinners, helpless, and enemies. If Christianity is going to triumph today it must be willing to overlook personal injustice and be ready to love people.

How can this happen? Before I was converted to Christ, my brother, who had been a Christian for two years, let the church know that I was quite a sinner. In fact, I was so involved in sin that after I was converted some made mention of it and showed surprise that I had given up my former lifestyle. My brother, however, played a large part in my conversion. Following acts of kindness and demonstrations of forgiveness, which I did not deserve, I allowed him to teach me the Gospel. He won me over through genuine love and a concerned interest in me. †

Peter Mostert preaches for the church of Christ in Riverside, California, USA.

Sonnet

*We dream of long days far ahead and say
"A thousand years from now the world will know
A peace that lasts when war has passed away,
The world will then be bright and skies will glow —
Then man will greet his brother with a smile.
No envious thoughts will come to gender strife —
Through generous will he'll go 'the second mile'.
The Golden Rule will be the law of life."*

*A thousand years ago they said the same
And dreamed that in our day there'd be no fear.
They were the spark, and thought we'd be the flame.
Have we fulfilled the dreams of yesteryear?
Let us not say, "Sometime" and trust "Somehow" —
The Golden Rule is **here**; let's do it **now**.*

— Charles R. Brewer

Pornography



A Plague on Every Society

“Pornography” comes from two Greek words: *pornei* meaning “fornication” and *grapei* meaning “writing”. Pornography applies to sexual behavior in magazines, books, movies, internet, etc. Paul condemns pornography in Ephesians 5:3,4: *“But fornication (porneia) and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting”* (NKJV). In Galatians 5:19-21 Paul lists the *“works of the flesh”* such as adultery, fornication, uncleanness and lewdness and adds, *“and the like”*.

We are not arguing from the standards of society, which are subjective

and susceptible to man's capriciousness. We emphasize that God's nature and God's will as revealed in the Bible are the only criteria for moral judgments (John 12:48). If a person rejects God, there is no standard of morality and the result is moral chaos.

If it is reasonable to say that destructive material does no harm, then it is equally reasonable to say that constructive material does no good. Pornography treats sex as something to be seen publicly. It suggests that sex has nothing to do with love, commitment or marriage. It portrays bizarre forms of sex, such as homosexuality and bestiality, as normal. Pornography teaches children that irresponsible sex has no consequences — no venereal diseases, no illegitimate births, no abortions, no divorce. The Bible teaches that sex is to be enjoyed in marriage: *"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4).

Pornography treats people, especially women, as objects to be used. Pornography has one purpose — to stimulate lustful thoughts. We are to respect each other, not use and abuse each other. *"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification"* (Romans 15:2; cf. Matthew 7:12). Pornography does not build character into

God's image. Paul says we are to bring *"every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Pornography harms the family as well. Men tend to want the same behavior from their wives that they see in magazines. Different attitudes over the sexual relationship contribute to divorce. In Paul's beautiful passage on marriage, in Ephesians 5, he tells husbands to love *"their own wives"* three times in verses 28-33.

Pornography is addictive and progressive. It begins with mini-skirts and bikinis and progresses to pornography that depicts the act of sex itself. It shocks the senses first; it is awful, disgusting, repulsive. Once it becomes common and legitimate, it also becomes acceptable. Peter says, *"abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul"* (1 Peter 2:11).

Paul says we are to be enslaved to nobody and nothing except Jesus Christ (Romans 6:12-23). If you are addicted to pornography, there is hope.

◆ You must first make the decision to overcome your problem. Help is available in and through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 6:1-7).

◆ Confide in a Christian friend who believes in and practices prayer.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

◆ Limit your own access to pornography. Sometimes when a person becomes a Christian he or she must change the people with whom they spend time (1 Corinthians 15:33), places they visit, and things they do (Philippians 4:8).

◆ Fill the time with more constructive behaviors such as Bible reading and prayer or visiting the sick (Matthew 12:43-45).

◆ Be patient with yourself but do not excuse your behavior.

Any addiction is hard to overcome but eventually through repentance and prayer, the individual acts of sin will come further and further apart. *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13).

If your spouse is addicted to pornography, you are not alone. Emotional confusion and mistrust are natural reactions. Here's what you can do to help:

◆ Pray for yourself and your spouse.

◆ Pray your spouse can and will overcome the devil through Christ.

◆ Pray for your own strength and patience.

◆ Don't let your spouse's problem with pornography dominate your thoughts.

◆ Don't trivialize the sin, but don't be judgmental toward your spouse either: *"for all have sinned and fall (present tense verb) short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).

◆ Deal with your anger and hurt honestly and **communicate, communicate, communicate.**

Eventually, through your spouse's repentance and your prayer, you both will overcome.

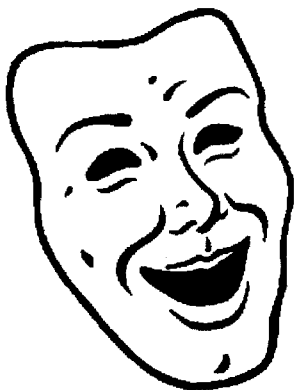
Pornography is certainly a sin every nation can do without. Proverbs 11:11 says: *"By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked."* †

Author Unknown

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness... [Mark 7:21].

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he... [Proverbs 23:7].

PROVERBS 17:22



Overheard: "I wouldn't say anything about her unless it's good. And, boy, is this good!"



Truth is so precious some people use it sparingly.



Did you hear about the Japanese fellow who went to the eye doctor? The doctor told him, "You've got a cataract." The man replied, "No, I've got a Rinken Continental."



Just before a recent flying trip a gentleman decided to buy some flight insurance. Nearby was one of those old-time scales that tell you your weight and your fortune. He

put the money in, stepped on the scales, and out came his little card. It said, "You weigh 165 lbs., and your recent investments are about to pay off."



A man went to the doctor to get some advice on how to stop snoring. The doctor asked him, "Does your snoring disturb your wife?" "Does it disturb my wife? Man, it disturbs the whole congregation!"



What do you call a frightened sailor? Chicken of the Sea.



It is said that the average man has 66 pounds of muscle and a 3.2 pound brain. That probably explains a lot of things.



"Your thyroid is normal," the doctor told the overweight patient. "What you are suffering from is an overactive fork."



A sweater is something a child wears when his mother gets cold.

PROVERBS 17:22

Deacon Dunwoody had an interesting philosophy about preaching — A good beginning and a good ending make a good sermon if they come close together.



The Park Ranger asked, “Does the mountain air disagree with your wife?” Cousin Virgil answered, “It wouldn’t dare!”



A battered old jalopy coasted into a service station and the driver filled it with gasoline. When the fellow saw the total cost, he muttered, “Well, how about that?! One tank of gas and I’ve doubled the value of my car!”



The truck driver looked cautiously at the soup he had just been served in a backwoods eatery. It contained dark flecks of seasoning — but two of the spots were suspicious.

“Hey,” he called out to the waitress. “These particles in my soup — aren’t they foreign objects of some kind?”

She looked at his bowl and said, “No, sir! Those things live around here.”

Joe: “I had to shoot my dog.”

Jack: “Was he mad?”

Joe: “Well, he sure wasn’t very pleased!”



If our politicians were running the Sahara Desert, we’d already be out of sand.



Teacher: “Tommy, if I lay one egg on the table and two on the chair, how many will I have altogether?”

Tommy: “Well, personally, I don’t think you can do it.”



I don’t mean to ridicule, but I saw this one fellow who was so big he could apply for group insurance.



A couple called a neighbor to extend birthday greetings. They dialed his number and then sang “Happy Birthday” into the telephone. But when they had finished their off-key rendition, they discovered they had the wrong number.

“Don’t let it bother you,” said the stranger. “You folks sure can use the practice.”

The Will To Discipline

Dale Grissom

Parents are making a serious mistake when they fail to discipline their children. As a result, many children grow up to be very rebellious and selfish, bringing much heartache to their parents. We can read in 1 Samuel chapters 2 and 3 that Eli's children brought shame upon him because he failed to discipline them. Parents sin against their own children when they do not teach them to be responsible and work for the things they want. Often we see parents sacrifice to give their children everything they want, even if it is something they don't need.

It seems we have forgotten what the Bible teaches about raising children and are following the ways of the world. I think we should take a serious look at the number of murders being committed by young people, the thefts, and the sexual promiscuity that is going on in the world. Many couples are living together out of wedlock, many have children born out of wedlock, and some choose abortion.

It's later than we think. We have become a society that no longer blushes at the awful sins of an undisciplined nation. Many have

become so hardened by sin that they will not respond to the teaching of the Gospel of Christ.

This is a difficult time to raise children. So many young people are out all hours of the night and their parents have no idea where they are. Their parents should have told them "no" consistently. Instead, drinking, drugs, and prostitution have become a way of life for them. It is going to take the best we have to offer in order to discipline and control our children. Their peers are unrestricted and are participating in all kinds of sins, making the job of Christian parents much harder.

Parents, please do your best to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) *"And ye Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* Daily devotionals, (prayer and Bible study), need to be a part of our lives and our children's lives. Parents, take back the control of your homes, and love your children enough to discipline them. †

Dale Grissom works with Lord's church in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

Why Did God Make Woman?

Nancy Wheat



Why did God make woman? Did God ever make anything with no purpose or with no reason for being? No way! Our God is a great creator; He has made every minute creature with a wonderful purpose. So, too, was woman made with a wonderful God-given purpose. It does not matter what I think woman's purpose is. It doesn't matter what any person's idea is. God's purpose is the purpose we must fulfill.

Genesis tells the story of God creating this incredible universe. Each plant, fly, bird, and animal in this marvelous creation had a purpose. Man's purpose was to tend the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). It was a seemingly idyllic situation, but God said, "*It is not good for*

man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). Then God performed yet another miracle: He made Adam's "*help-meet*" — woman. Man was not complete, creation was not complete, until God made woman. There is no one in creation like woman. No other creature can fulfill woman's purpose.

Genesis 2:23,24 says the man said, "*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.*" The text goes on to tell us that "*for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.*" Our purpose is to partner man. God created man and woman to form families, the

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

most basic units in society. We are to help each other in the smooth running of the family. Our roles as man and woman differ, however. Just as God stayed in heaven while Jesus came to earth to fulfill their work, each have a different role, so man and woman have separate roles in the home.

Animals fulfill their God-given roles through instinct. Most of what we do, though, has to be learned. Ephesians 5:21-23 and 1 Peter 3:1-9 tell women to be submissive to their husbands. To be submissive means to “lovingly defer to someone” or to “put yourself wholly at the disposal” of someone. Ladies, read Philippians 2:5-8 and then decide if you are being submissive in Jesus’ way. Submission does not mean being subjugated or trampled on. Jesus submitted to His father’s will with loving obedience.

Let us give ourselves to the leadership of our husbands. Yes, many men are not fulfilling their part to love as Christ loved the church, but this does not excuse us from our part. 1 Peter 3 tells us to win those husbands “*without a word by the purity and reverence of*

your lives.” Titus 2:3-5 tells woman to “*learn to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands.*” Why? “*So that no one will malign the word of God.*” As Christians, we readily agree that we would never want God’s Word maligned. Do our lives back up this desire?

Let’s pray together, husbands and wives, that we will help each other live according to the pattern God gave us for our homes. Men, if you will treat your wives lovingly, gently, as the weaker vessel, they will have an easier time submitting to your leadership. Ladies, if you respect, admire, and obey your husbands as Sarah did Abraham, they will find it easier to be gentle with you.

Remember, we are helping each other to fight Satan’s power over our lives. When we fight each other, point fingers, and excuse ourselves, Satan has won. Don’t let him control your family. †

Nancy Wheat and her husband Bobby were long-time missionaries to Zimbabwe and are now living in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, USA.

**God has placed us in this arena of tribulation and affliction.
Let us seek to glorify Him in it and to be among
those whom He is looking for.**

— Rebekah McCormick

Coping with the Pressures of Singlehood

Kevin Moore

The following suggestions are for those who may find it difficult dealing with the pressures of single life.

1. Realize that you are not the only one (Hebrews 12:1). The Bible is filled with examples of great men and women who were not married, including Jeremiah, Mary Magdalene, Timothy, Lydia, and Paul. Millions of people throughout the world today are in the same situation as you, and are coping with the pressures of singlehood. You are not alone.

2. Remove yourself from the center of your life (1 Corinthians 10:24). The reason many individuals struggle with singlehood is because they are too self-absorbed, and consequently filled with self-pity. In order to be happy, one must learn to replace self-centeredness with servant-mindedness. The interests of God and others must always supersede one's own.

3. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). Remember

that Jesus lived His life as a single man, and He experienced every struggle and temptation that other unmarried persons face (Hebrews 4:15). He is our perfect example. If singles would spend more time focusing on Jesus, and less time searching for partners or feeling sorry for themselves, their lives would be much more fulfilling.

4. Be involved in the Lord's work (1 Corinthians 15:58). All Christians, including singles, should be so busy laboring for the Master that they have no time to get lonely, struggle with temptations, and worry about their temporal lives. There are plenty of things unmarried disciples can do in the service of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32).

5. Develop close relationships with your spiritual family (Ephesians 2:19). The love, support, and companionship one may be lacking without a spouse are adequately supplied in the fellowship of God's people (Mark 10:29,30; Hebrews 10:24). Loneliness and self-pity should

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

diminish as intimate ties are formed with Christian brothers and sisters.

6. Learn to appreciate the blessings of singlehood (1 Corinthians 7:25-35). Whether you are married or single, your situation should be used to the glory of God. Since unmarried Christians usually have fewer family responsibilities, more time and resources can be devoted to spiritual service. Single Christians are generally more effective in reaching out to other singles through evangelism, encouragement, and example. There are many advantages to being single!

7. Trust in God (Proverbs 3:5,6). When you put your life in God's hands, you don't have to worry about being married or single because He knows what's best for you (Romans 8:28). He can help you overcome the temptations and struggles associated with being unmarried (1 Corinthians 10:13). With God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

8. Be content with your situation in life (Philippians 4:11-13). Happiness and contentment are not dependent on one's outward circumstances — they come from within. Marriage in and of itself is not the key to happiness. The high percentage of divorces and unstable marriages are proof of that! Instead of making wedlock your number one goal in life, learn to be content

within yourself (1 Timothy 6:6).

9. Pray regularly (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Whenever you struggle with the pressures of anxiety, discouragement, loneliness, and temptation, remember that you can talk to God and He will bear these burdens for you (Philippians 4:6,7). Jesus spent much of His single life on His knees.

10. Commit your life totally to God (Ecclesiastes 12:13). A person's whole duty is not simply to get married and have a family, but to reverence God and keep His commandments. Whether an individual is married or unmarried, his life cannot be complete without the Lord. The joy of living is experienced, regardless of one's status in life, by a meaningful relationship with the Creator (Philippians 4:4; Romans 8:31-39).

Generally speaking, unmarried Christians have no more problems than married Christians — just different kinds. If you are not married, be encouraged in your Christian walk as you follow these ten steps. Don't use your singlehood as an excuse or allow it to be a hindrance. Single Christians are not a special group in the church to be pitied or ministered unto, but are a dynamic force to be utilized in the great work of Jehovah. †

Kevin Moore works with the church of Christ in Wanganui, New Zealand.

Neighbors

Danny Cline

A robbery victim by the road...
As three adventurers toward him strode:

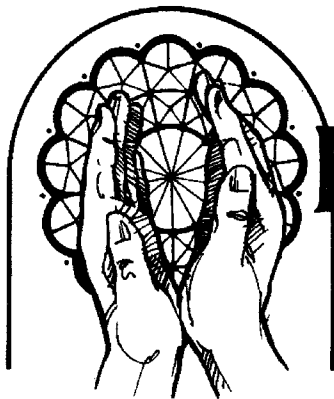
Religious men, the first two were —
No, not in practice, just in word —
Each came to where the fellow was
And giving little more than pause
Regained their pace in selfish cause.

The third: a more compassionate man,
Saw love as more than well-wished plan,
And in his brother's desperate need
Bound up his wounds, loaned him his steed;
Then brought him to a wayside inn
And nursed him toward his health again.

He bade the keeper tend him more
[Which brings the number now to four
Of those who could their grace outpour].

Of course the innsman garnered pay;
The first two may have merely prayed;
The third, alone, would fitly play
The role of neighbor in his day.

Now, bring to five this growing list
Of could-be servants who assist
For pay, mere pray, or Christ-like way?
Which would *you* be?
Neighbor, or nay?



The Providence of God

Donna Mitchell

Do you have difficulty concentrating on the lyrics of a hymn? From time to time we have analyzed a hymn and, when next sung, it is easier to think about the thoughts expressed.

One of my favorite hymns is *The Providence of God* by Walter E. Brightwell and Lloyd O. Sanderson. It begins: **“The Mighty God, omniscient one! His ways we cannot trace.”**

God knew us before we were born. *“Behold, the former things have come to pass and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them”* (Isaiah 42:9).

“But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days...” (Daniel 2:28).

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36).

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

God is in control. In an article, Stan Mitchell quoted the old saying that the sun never sets on the British Empire, but he concluded that nothing on earth remains the same. Friends come and go, leaders rise and fall, even the power of the nations waxes and wanes. However, there is One whose sun will never set. We need to hold to God’s unchanging hand.

The words of the hymn continue: **“Lo, I can see Him in His word, I will not doubt or fear.”**

We can see the working of God in the life of Abraham, a major charac-

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

ter in God's plan to save man. Abraham received a promise from God but he did not have knowledge of the future.

Joseph recognized God's working in his life. He had various kinds of influence from his parents, his brothers, Potiphar's wife, the butler and the baker, and we are inspired by his reaction to each influence. Joseph's forgiveness and conclusion that God's plan was being fulfilled are seen in Genesis 50:19,20: "*Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*"

Think of Queen Esther and the incidents leading to her decision to help her people "*for such a time as this*" (Esther 4:14).

What a dramatic life change occurred for Paul when he became a disciple! Think of his conversion, persecution and the rejection by some brethren, then note the coming of Barnabas into his life. Was this not God's providence?

The writer penned these reassuring words: "**No trial can my spirit break, for God will not forsake. He will with each temptation make a way for my escape.**"

We can go on through all circumstances when our hearts turn to God. "*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you,*

leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

God provides a way of escape; He does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

After the death of her husband, my friend Jeanette Carroll wrote: "God has a master plan and Don's death is a part of that. We may not understand why or what, but we will one day."

With the writer we look forward with hope, "**The future beckons and I bow, my God removes the care.**"

He does care for me (1 Peter 5:7). Those words, used in the title of Charles Sheldon's book, have comforted thousands of believers.

Greg Taylor, missionary in Uganda, wrote of a young, barefoot girl named Jessica who was seduced by a teacher. The girl was forced into a common-law marriage and humiliated and degraded by her "educated" husband. Such stories

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

are told many times in Africa, but this one has a good ending. Jessica's husband came face to face with the Word of God, and he submitted. He confessed that he had raped Jessica many years ago and he had been unfaithful to her many times. He started treating her with respect and dignity! And the light started twinkling in her eyes again. She had hope!

“He is everywhere...I’ve never passed beyond the sphere of the providence of God.”

God is unlimited in time, His omniscience informs us that He is unlimited in knowledge, and His omnipotence says that He is unlimited in power, so the omnipresence of God declares that He is unlimited in space. God is present everywhere. Jehovah asks, *“Am I only a God nearby? declares the Lord, and*

not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:23,24 NIV).

“Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Psalm 139:7-10).

Indeed, we have never passed beyond the sphere of the wonderful providence of God. †

Donna Mitchell, with her husband, Loy, has spent many years in the mission field of Zimbabwe. They currently divide their time between Zimbabwe and the church in Topeka, Kansas, USA.

Courage or Foolishness?

**It takes a lot of courage
To put things in God's hands,
To give ourselves completely —
Our lives, our hopes, our plans —
To follow where He leads us
And make His will our own —
But all it takes is foolishness
To go the way alone!**

— Selected

A Prayer Before Going to God's House

Gary C. Hampton

“Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, For to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up. For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You.

“The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

“But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.

“For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is destruction; Their throat is an open tomb; They flatter with their tongue. Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, For they have rebelled against You.

“But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield” (Psalm 5).

David put the words of a morning prayer to music so it could be sung as he prepared to go to God's house. It was a prayer born out of intense devotion, or meditation. Interestingly, though David was the king of Israel, he recognized that he was only a representative of the Lord who was the true King of Israel.

Prayer to God was the act with which David began his day. There was an air of expectancy as David said he would direct his prayer to the true King and look up. In other words, he believed God would hear his prayer and act upon its contents (verses 1-3). Spurgeon asked, “How can we

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

expect the Lord to open the windows of his grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look up for the promised favor?" (p. 51).

David knew God could not find pleasure in the actions of the wicked, nor allow the evil to abide with Him. Further, he realized the boisterous behavior of some could not continue in the presence of the Almighty. Those who work iniquity are hated by God. Those who lie may escape the courts of men, but God will destroy them. Of course, the Lord does not enjoy the company of any who are thirsty after the blood of others (verses 4-6).

However, David, because he was not such a man, was ready to enter into the house of God. He would enter because of the greatness and fullness of God's favor, not based on his own sinlessness. He planned to prostrate himself in worship toward the Holy of Holies (according to Keil and Delitzsch, p. 125). He planned to ask God to guide him in the direction God would have him to follow. Because he felt the presence of his enemies, David would ask God to make the path of his life even and straight, so that he could walk unimpeded and without going astray (verses 7,8).

David saw his enemies as people in whose mouths was "nothing that should stand firm, keep its

ground, remain the same." He also saw their inward, guiding force as being corrupt, like "a yawning abyss and a gaping vacuum." David saw his enemies' throat, "as the organ of speech, as...a grave, which yawns like the jaws, which open and snatch and swallow down whatever comes in their way."

At the same time, they tried to smooth their tongues, as with flattering words, to hide the evil stench of their intent (Keil and Delitzsch, pp. 126-127). David called on God to pronounce them guilty. He asked the Ruler of the universe to cause them to fail in their plans. He also wanted them cast out from God's presence because of their evil deeds. After all, they had rebelled against the one true Ruler of all (verses 9,10)!

God's faithful punishment of His enemies would cause those who trusted in Him to rejoice. This would be an evident sign that He was defending His people against those who would bring them down.

Knowing that God was their defender should result in His people glorifying His name. After all, it would then have been apparent that God blesses those who walk within His will and keeps them safe with an all-encompassing shield (verses 11,12)! †

Gary C. Hampton preaches for the Central Avenue Church of Christ in Valdosta, Georgia, USA.



Sarah,

A Beautiful Woman of God

Frances Parr

“Sarai” was changed to “Sarah”, meaning “princess.” In addition, God blessed her, saying she would become the mother of nations, and that kings would come from her (Genesis 17:16).

Grandmother said, “Beauty is as beauty does.” Peter explained in 1 Peter 3:3,4 that a gentle and quiet spirit is of great worth in God’s sight. From all accounts, Sarai, wife of Abram, possessed all of these attributes. In addition to her physical beauty, she was respectful to her husband, calling him “lord” (1 Peter 3:6).

God chose Sarai’s husband to be the beginning of the nation of Israel, promising them many descendants, along with land and blessings. In the process, God changed their names. “Abram” became “Abraham” which means “father of a multitude”, and

Sarah’s beauty was such that the Scriptures record two occasions on which Abraham asked her to say that she was his sister instead of his wife so that his life might be spared. This was a partial truth, for she was indeed his half-sister. The pharaoh of Egypt and Abimelech, king of Gerar, took her to be their wife. God inflicted serious diseases on the Egyptians and warned Abimelech in a dream. Because God had a special plan for Sarah, He allowed nothing to interfere with it.

Years passed after God’s promise of descendants for Sarah and Abraham, and Sarah bore no

BIBLE CHARACTERS

child. In an effort to help God out, Sarah suggested that Abraham take her maid, Hagar. Any children born to Hagar would be considered as belonging to Sarah. When Hagar conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. An angry Sarah turned her out. However, God, through the Angel of the Lord, advised Hagar to return and be obedient to Sarah, which she did.

A number of years later, three heavenly beings came to Abraham's tent and informed him and Sarah that they would have a son. They both laughed at this idea, but with God's help, Sarah did conceive and she bore a son. They named him Isaac, which means "laughter." Sarah was 90 years old and her husband was 100.

The apostle Paul quotes God as saying, "*My power is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Corinthians 12:9). God had a perfect plan for Sarah and Abraham. He would not toler-

ate Sarah's interference in arranging a son through Hagar, and He waited until their advanced age proved beyond any doubt that He was responsible for her conception.

Sarah was greatly beloved by her son, and God's promise to Abraham lived on through Isaac and his descendants. Sarah, herself, died at the age of 127 and was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham purchased from the Hittites. Later, her husband, child, and grandchildren were laid in the same tomb.

As is usual in the Bible, we read of Sarah's good and bad qualities. In spite of her mistakes with Hagar, she is, to this day, considered a worthy example of a godly woman. She was completely human, yet a very beautiful woman of God. †

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, USA.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.*

By faith Abraham obeyed ... By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude — innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore (Hebrews 11:1,8,11,12).

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Judah's 16th king, Josiah, was the product of unworthy ancestors. His grandfather, Manasseh, worshipped Baal, and he "*made Judah to do worse than the heathen*" (2 Chronicles 33:9).

Josiah's father, Amnon, came into power at the death of his father. He did evil, serving the idols that his father had served (2 Kings 21:20,21). Finally, he was slain by his own servants.

The king about whom we write worshipped the God of Israel. He repaired the temple. During this work, the forgotten and

lost Book of the Law (God's Word) was found. It was read to King Josiah, and he immediately realized just how far God's people had wandered into the Valley of Sin.

Josiah rent his clothes (2 Kings 22:11), and gave to the priests instructions to pray for the nation. He was greatly troubled, for he knew that God must be angry with them.

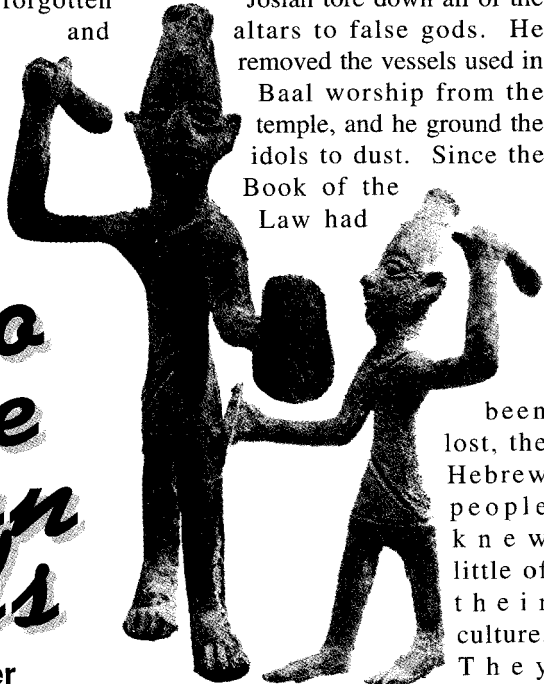
He decreed that all of the people must come to the temple, and the king read to them from the book (23:2). Then began an era of reform in Judah.

Josiah tore down all of the altars to false gods. He removed the vessels used in Baal worship from the temple, and he ground the idols to dust. Since the Book of the Law had

been lost, the Hebrew people knew little of their culture. They

A King Who Tore Down Idols

Betty Tucker



BIBLE CHARACTERS

had not observed the Passover from the days of the judges, nor in all the days of the kings (23:22). Josiah made sure that the Passover was celebrated again in Jerusalem (verse 23). Through his reforms, this nation could once more be identified as a nation set apart by God.

But during this time there was also great political unrest. The Assyrians had long dominated Judah. Pharaoh Nechoh of Egypt joined forces with Assyria against the Babylonians and the Medes.

Josiah went out with his soldiers to confront the Egyptian Pharaoh. But Nechoh said, "*I have no quarrel with you get out of my way*" (2 Chronicles 35:21). The king of Judah would not back down, so the two forces met in battle.

Josiah disguised himself and joined the fray (2 Chronicles 35:22). The king was fatally wounded, and all of Judah mourned his death (2 Chronicles 35:24). Even the prophet Jeremiah publicly grieved the death of this good king. So ended the life of Josiah, who, in his lifetime, managed to restore Judah to her former spiritual order.

In conclusion, let us remember that the Book of the Law was lost *inside the temple*. Today, it could be lost *in the church building*. Sin is definitely on the increase.

More and more, we hear the winds of digression as they sweep through the brotherhood. There are few spiritual giants left in the Lord's church today that measure up to the standards raised by Josiah.

Perhaps we need to go back to the Book of the Law (the Bible). Perhaps it is time that we begin to pull down some of the altars which have been quietly raised in our midst! †

Betty Tucker is a Christian writer living in Linden, Tennessee, USA.

Example

**I am my neighbor's Bible,
He reads me when we meet;
Today he reads me in my
house,
Tomorrow in the street.
He may be relative or friend,
Or slight acquaintance be,
He may not even know my
name,
Yet he is reading me.**

— Author Unknown

Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc.

When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word.

1. **100** I was called a servant in a house, in contrast to the son (Hebrews 3:5,6).
2. **90** I am the only character in the Bible of whom it is said that God talked to me face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11).
3. **80** God used me to pen five books of the Bible (Joshua 8:31).
4. **70** A very strange bush brought me into a new relationship with God and with my people (Exodus 3:1-6),
5. **60** My life was divided into three main sections of work and responsibility: a prince, a shepherd, and a national leader and law-giver (Exodus 2:5-10; 2:11-22; Exodus 3...).
6. **50** Once I killed a man, and once in anger I hit a rock — deeds that caused trouble for me later (Exodus 2:11,12; Numbers 20:7-12).
7. **40** God told me that He had made me as God to my brother and to the king (Exodus 4:16; 7:1).
8. **30** When I died, angels buried me in an unknown grave in a valley in Moab (Deuteronomy 34:1-6).
9. **20** One of the great laws of God is called after my name (1 Corinthians 9:9).
10. **10** I was saved from execution by my mother and my sister, through their plan to float me in a basket until I would be rescued from the river (Exodus 2:1-6).



My Score

See answer on inside back cover.



Are Babies Born in Sin?

Glenn Colley

The Bible does not teach, as some allege, that babies are born in sin. The idea that we all inherit the guilt of Adam's sin and are thus born lost is a tragic and false doctrine. The New Testament offers a plan of salvation through Christ, but not a word of it applies to how babies can be saved. The reason is that babies are SAFE. They are not *in sin* and, therefore, do not need to be saved. If a baby dies, we should have no doubt that he or she is now awaiting our arrival in glory.

The verse most commonly used in proposing that babies are born in sin (the technical term for this is "total hereditary depravity") is Psalm 51:5, where we read from

David, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" Please observe, however, that David was speaking about **his mother**, and not **himself!** *The one who was in sin was his mother!* I heard someone recently explain this point in this way, "It would be like saying, 'In drunkenness did my father beat me.' The one who was drunken was not the *son*, but the *father*."

What, then, was the sin of David's mother? We are not told. And yet, there is an interesting possibility which will challenge the thoughts of anyone who has seriously considered this passage in Psalm 51.

When we go back to Deuter-

BIBLE QUESTIONS

onomy 23:2, we read, *“A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.”* This statement did not mean that these generations could not be in a right relationship with God, but there was, nonetheless, a cloud which hung over them. They could not be viewed with the full privileges of Israelites without this penalty.

Did you know that David was in such a line of ten generations? In Genesis 38 we read of the sinful relationship between Judah and Tamar. From their fornication, twin sons were born, Phares and Zara. David was a direct descendant of Phares. In fact, **David was the tenth generation!** Here is the genealogy: *“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king”* (Matthew 1: 1-6.).

It cannot be proven that this is what David had in mind when he

made his statement in Psalm 51:5, and yet it raises an interesting possibility.

What we must remember, as we study the Bible with our friends, is that babies are *not born in sin*. Ezekiel 18:20 teaches that each of us must bear the guilt only of **our own sins**: *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”*

Note further that David did not believe that babies were born in sin. Upon hearing that Bathsheba’s son had died, David said, *“But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”* One can hardly surmise that David had reference to his baby being in torment.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* If these little children came into this world black with sin, Jesus would not encourage us to be like them in order to enter heaven’s kingdom.

Babies are not born *in sin*. Babies are born *free from sin*. †

Glenn Colley preaches for the church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

Are We Saved By Water?

Cecil May, Jr.

In the course of a sermon emphasizing the necessity of being baptized, a gospel preacher said, "Of course, baptism doesn't save you."

Considering his context, what he meant was true. Water is not magical and the act of baptism is not meritorious.

It is best to take care, however, not to make a statement that directly contradicts a Bible statement. "Baptism doesn't save us?" The Bible says, "*Baptism saves us*" (1 Peter 3:21).

Peter is comparing baptism to what happened to Noah and his family in the days of the flood. At that time, Peter says, "*Eight souls were saved by water.*"

I was somewhat startled the first time I really thought about "saved by water." I thought, "Weren't they saved by the ark, from the water?"

God's concern, however, was not with saving Noah from the water. He sent the water. God willed to save Noah from the corrupt, violent, sin-filled world. The water destroyed the wickedness, lifted Noah and his family above it, and set them back down on a cleansed and renewed earth. "*Eight souls were saved by water.*"

Corresponding to that, Peter says, *baptism now saves us.*

Interestingly Peter, in making his statement, qualifies it the same two ways as the aforementioned preacher. There is no magic in the water. Baptism saves us "*by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"

As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we are raised with Him in baptism, by the same power with which God raised Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12). Baptism is **not** "baptismal regeneration, having efficacy without regard to faith on the part of the one being baptized," as is stated by those who believe that people are saved by grace and through faith alone. Baptism is the way we seek a good conscience from God (1 Peter 3:21). When we "*obey from the heart,*" we are made free from sin (Romans 6:17).

Baptism's significance is its reenactment in us of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Baptism's power is Christ's resurrection.

Baptism is faith in action.

With those qualifications understood, **baptism does save us.** †

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

DOCTOR REVEREND FATHER
Pastor

Religious Titles

John Thiesen

How should a minister of the Gospel be addressed? A minister should be addressed as any other person, without accompanying titles, as is popularly practiced in our day. If his name is Bob, call him "Bob." If the situation is one calling for formality, because you don't know him very well, then call him "Mr.," as you would any other person.

I realize that it is common practice to give a preacher a special title of honor, such as "Reverend", "Father", "Doctor", and so forth. But the popular thing is not always the right thing. In this case, it isn't the right thing to do because Jesus forbade it.

Religious Titles Exalt Man, Not God

People have always been the same. Among the Jews of Jesus'

day, people were fond of giving very respectful titles to their religious teachers and leaders. As a result, they wore special clothing to distinguish themselves from the rest of the people, as Jesus described in Matthew 23. They loved these special honorary titles. Jesus said of them that they loved "*to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven*" (verses 7-9).

Jesus concluded by saying, "*And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted*" (verse 12). The problem with these honorary titles, Jesus said, is that they exalt one man above the rest of

BIBLE QUESTIONS

the people. For instance, the title “reverend” means “worthy of reverence or fear”. No man is worthy of religious *reverence*, but God only. This word is used in the Bible to exalt God, who only is worthy of being feared; “*holy and reverend is His name*” (Psalm 111:9). Emphasizing that only God and His Son should be honored with such names, Jesus put the rest of us on an equal spiritual plane by adding: “*all ye are brethren*” (Matthew 23:8).

Origin Of Special Titles

The practice of bestowing honorary titles on preachers was not done in the church during New Testament times, but started in the centuries after Christ. It arose out of the struggle to form a special priest

class in the church. Originally, all Christians were called priests of God (1 Peter 2:5). All were servants of God, and brothers. There were different offices or functions in the church, but no separate priest class. The later emergence of a clergy-laity system was unknown from the beginning. It was only when Christians began to depart from the Word of God and to build new religious fellowships that the practice of exalting their teachers and preachers with flattering titles sprang up in the churches. Today, we need to get back to Christ and His Word and return to exalting Him and His Father again, rather than one another. †

John Thiesen is a missionary working in Malawi, Central Africa.

Be Negative

*Learn to say No! The world's in need of men
who know a good from evil deed.
Learn to say No! And then stick to it,
Unmoved when men say, "Everybody's doing it."
Learn to say No! And don't delay it;
Fence-straddling fails; then stand and say it.
Learn to say No! Nor fear derision;
Stick bravely with your bold decision.
Learn to say No! We've waited long
For souls God-fearing, who hate the wrong.
Learn to say No! And in double measure
Christ's joy will be your constant treasure.*

— via Fairmont, WV

LEVITICUS

Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Leviticus 19:18

A A R O N B F A L T A R C G T E
S T M P A S S O V E R F P H A I
A J O M K P R F N D L E N Z T O
N R S N U D V F A E A W A P N X
C A E A E Y B E P C V Z R B A K
T Y S D H M R R E T E I R C N S
U S C A T B E I S L E E G A E E
A O A B I H U N E S A O H R V C
R R P A T P S G T D D T E S O I
Y P E P L E A S I N G Y A E C F
C E G W O G B A V T M E R C Y I
S L O H S L B N E Y L I N B N R
N W A M O I A C L O F A U T I C
I C T O H D T M K A E L G F H A
S R D U A P H U N L E A V E N S
A J U B I L E E C A N I M A L S

LEVITES	ATONEMENT	UNLEAVEN	LEPROSY
AARON	AZAZEL	PEACE	CLEAN
NADAB	SCAPEGOAT	THANK	ANIMALS
ABIHU	SACRIFICES	SANCTUARY	ALTAR
MOSES	PLEASING	LORD	FIRE
PRIESTS	JUBILEE	GOD	SINS
FORGIVEN	SABBATH	TITHE	
OFFERING	COVENANT	BLOOD	
PASSOVER	BREAD	MERCY	

To Judge or Not to Judge

Mike Eaton

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:1,2).

Many live in a politically correct environment where “Tolerance!” is the cry of the day. It seems that every time a Christian takes a moral stance on any issue, someone objects and says, “You have no right to judge me! Judge not that you be not judged.” To this objection I would respond, “Well, excuse me, but you have just judged me for judging you! How contradictory can you be?”

Jesus’ statement in the Sermon on the Mount is one of the most misapplied verses in all of Scripture. *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:1,2).*

At first glance one might think that Jesus condemned any and all judging. However, such could not be the case. Elders must often make

judgment calls, for their responsibility is to shepherd the souls in their flock. Church members must “judge” potential elders to determine if they meet the criteria Paul described (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Christians are expected on certain occasions to make value judgments and to choose between different policies and plans of action. It is our responsibility to speak the Word of God whether it happens to be in season or out of season (2 Timothy 4:2).

Within the Sermon on the Mount itself, Christ said, *“A good tree can not bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:18,20).* Common sense often allows us to know when a person’s spiritual life is in danger. We can make a judgment concerning the direction of one’s life by looking at the fruit produced

TEXTUAL STUDIES

by the way he is living his life. If his actions are not in keeping with God's Word, then we know that he has a problem, and we have not done wrong by recognizing that problem. To the contrary, we may now offer him some constructive criticism. There is a difference between being judgmental and being an inspector of fruit.

When Jesus prohibited judging, he condemned what R. V. G. Tasker called the "habit of censorious and carping criticism." Jesus called for prevention of harsh criticism, such that is for the purpose of finding fault.

"Censoriousness," as Tasker called it, does nothing but depress those against whom it is directed. It does not strengthen the person; it weakens his moral fiber.

Harsh criticism also increases the self-righteousness of those who display it. It invites others to join in and "nit pick" some poor soul to death.

Those who are tempted to point out fault with others should remem-

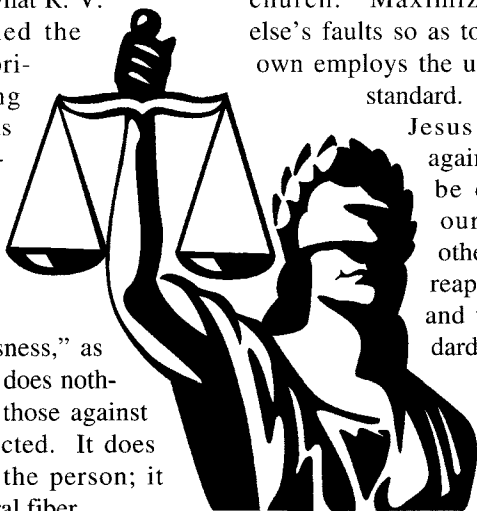
ber Jesus' poignant statement, "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2). We will be treated the way we treat others. Let us be reminded that not a single adult human is faultless.

Common sense tells us we **may** and sometimes **must** pass judgment on someone else. But harsh criticism and "putting people in their place" are not to be tolerated in the church. Maximizing someone else's faults so as to minimize our own employs the use of a double standard. This was what

Jesus was warning against. Let us all be careful about our treatment of other people. We reap what we sow, and the same standard we use against others will eventually be used against us.

May God help us to distinguish between making fair judgments and possessing an *attitude* of judgmentalism. There is a difference. †

Mike Eaton preaches for the Acton congregation near Michie, Tennessee, USA.



It is far better to forgive and forget than to hate and remember.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Royce Frederick

"You O King, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome" (Daniel 2:31).

Nebuchadnezzar II ruled the Babylonian Empire with his father from 607 B.C. until his father died, then ruled alone from 605 B.C. to 562 B.C. He took captives from Jerusalem in 597 B.C. and in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Daniel was an early Jewish captive who became one of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 occurred about 603 B.C. The king did not tell his dream, but commanded his wise men to tell him what he had dreamed, as well as its meaning. When they could not, he began killing them. But Daniel and his three Jewish friends prayed to God, and He revealed to Daniel the king's dream and its meaning: *"You O King, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet of iron and clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth"* (Daniel 2:31-35).

The meaning — The image represented four kingdoms of men. *"And in the days of these kings (during the fourth kingdom) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"* (Daniel 2:44).

The fulfillment — The first kingdom was Nebuchadnezzar's (2:38). The second was *"the Medes and Persians"* (5:28; see 6:8). More than 200 years before it happened, Daniel foretold that the third kingdom would be

TEXTUAL STUDIES

“the kingdom of Greece” (8:21; see 8:20,7). History shows that the fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire. In the days of those kings, Jesus and others preached, *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”* (near) (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). He said, *“...there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power”* (Mark 9:1)!

Acts 2 records that the kingdom began with power on the Jewish Day of Pentecost when about 3,000 people obeyed the Gospel of Christ! It was A.D. 33, or A.D. 29 by adjusted calendars. Later, speaking of Christians, Paul wrote that God *“...has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...”* (Colossians 1:13). This shows that the kingdom had come and they had entered into it. This is the eternal kingdom which Daniel had foretold 600 years earlier! Jesus is now reigning as King over His kingdom, the church (1 Corinthians 15:24, 25; Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:18,19; Acts 2:30,33,36). Jesus Christ is now *“Lord of lords and King of kings”* (Revelation 17:14)!

The Dream	The Meaning	The Fulfillment
Head of Gold	Nebuchadnezzar (2:38)	Babylonian Empire (final era) — 626 B.C. to 539 B.C.
Chest & Arms of Silver	A Second Kingdom (2:39)	Medo-Persian Empire — 539 B.C. to 331 B.C.
Belly & Thighs of Bronze	A Third Kingdom (2:39)	Greek Empire — 331 B.C. to 168 B.C.
Legs of Iron, Feet of Iron & Clay	A Fourth Kingdom (2:40)	Roman Empire — 133 B.C. to A.D. 476
Stone Which Hit the Image	Everlasting Kingdom (2:44)	Kingdom of Christ, His Church — A.D. 33 through Eternity

You can become a citizen of the ETERNAL KINGDOM by obeying the Gospel (John 3:3-5; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22:16; Galatians 3:26,27); *“...our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...”* (Philippians 3:20,21). Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God, and it will continue forever (Luke 1:33; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 11:15)! †

Royce Frederick is the editor of *International Gospel Teacher* and lives in Lufkin, Texas, USA.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .



From the Past to the Present

The Greeks called the ancient inhabitants of Romania “Getae”; the Roman name for them was “Dacian”. As early as the seventh century BC the Greeks had trading colonies along the Black Sea route. The Romans conquered the area in 105 AD. Though Emperor Aurelian withdrew Roman troops and administration in 271, to avoid war with the Goths, the Romanized peasants remained in the land that was then termed Dacia.

Succeeding centuries saw conquest of the region by Hungarians and then Turks. Legendary names in the resistance to the Turkish expansion were Vlad Tepes (“the Impaler”, the ruling prince of Wallachia whose practice of impaling enemies on stakes inspired the legend of “Count Dracula”) and Stefan the Great.

In World War I, Romania took the side of Britain, France and Russia, with the goal of re-uniting with Transylvania whose population was two-thirds Romanian. When Austria and Hungary were defeated, the territories that had at one time been a part of Romania were restored.

In the years leading up to World War II, Romania formed an alliance with France, Britain, and other European countries, to ensure its own securi-

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

ty. However, the declaration of a dictatorship by King Carol II and the fall of France in 1940 created a near domino-effect in the dismemberment of Romania: Russia occupied Bessarabia, Transylvania was ceded to Hungary by order of Germany and Italy, and Dorogea was given to Bulgaria.

Widespread rebellion brought the abdication of King Carol. A fascist dictatorship was imposed and Romania was dragged into the war as an ally of Germany. The peoples' resentment against the Nazis was strong, in spite of the forced alliance, and in 1944 Romania suddenly joined the Allied Forces, capturing the thousands of German soldiers within her borders. While fighting with the Nazis, half a million Romanian soldiers had died. Another 170,000 died in the last fifteen months of the war. Romanian and Soviet armies drove the German forces out of Transylvania, and the Romanian army continued the fight into Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Tragically for the Romanians, an agreement between Stalin and Churchill placed Romania within the sphere of Russian "influence" at the end of the war. The result was that the government became communistic, and more years of repression and struggle ensued for the Romanian people.

A revolution broke out in December of 1989, overthrowing the dictator (Nicolae Ceausescu) but putting other communists into power. Under the



Eighty per cent of the people of Romania live in high-rise apartments, such as these.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

new government, things were somewhat better: "The authorities no longer mandated how many light bulbs could be used in each house, how many children a woman should have or which conversations had to be reported to the secret police. But intimidation and occasional violence remained tools of the government"

Finally, a new constitution went into effect in 1991. By 1996 many of the state-owned companies had been privatized, and the Communist Party went out of power. However, the road to real change is rocky and long. Great government indebtedness has required a tightening of money in the economy, and a general feeling of hopelessness has disillusioned many Romanians. Time will tell whether or not the leaders will prove to be statesmen or politicians, and whether the democratic process will continue to be the power in control, or whether the country will revert to communism.

However, the change of leadership opened the door for drastic changes in many areas, and particularly with regard to spiritual opportunities. Though almost all of the people are, in name at least, Romanian Orthodox, they have a profound interest in studying the Bible.

Spiritual History

Efforts of the churches of Christ to spread the Gospel in Romania go back at least to 1964 when **Bob Hare**, missionary from Germany, first visited the Transylvania region. The following year **Gwen Hensley**, founder of **Eastern European Missions** in Vienna, Austria, arranged to have Bibles and tracts printed in the Romanian language. Since that time the churches of Christ throughout the world have co-operated in helping the orphans and poor of Romania, as well as printing and distributing Bibles and teaching the Gospel. In 1970, **Hans Nowak**, from Vienna, through contacts in East Germany, became aware of Romanian congregations meeting in the Moldau region in the north and in the Danube River area in the south. **Mladen Jovanovic** of Croatia and **Valeriano Lanaspas** of Switzerland, delivered food to Romanian Christians in Timisoara in 1989.

Articles and material
submitted by:

Paul Holland
Harvey Starling
Gerald Nichols
Eric Welch
Bill White

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

In early January of 1990, immediately following the revolution in which Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown, **Mike Davidow**, then living in Vienna, Austria, and **Don Yelton** loaded a truck with food and Bibles and drove from Vienna through Hungary down to Sibiu. They distributed the food to orphanages and the Bibles to anyone who wanted one, along with coupons for Bible correspondence course study. When they got back to Vienna they called **Bill McDonough** and asked him to go to Romania. In Bucharest, he ran correspondence course advertising in the largest newspapers in Romania and visited the Minister of Health. The health official told him he was the first foreigner in his office.

More than 3,000 people requested correspondence study from a small classified advertisement which appeared only once, so they ran a series of ads over a three-month period. Those insertions generated more than 50,000 responses!

In order to stay in close contact with the government officials, brother McDonough's **Partners in Progress** organized a medical team to go to Romania to work in orphanages in March of 1990 (**Dr. Mike Jusuts**, Searcy, Ark., **Dr. David Darrah**, Smithville, TN, **Dr. Erie Dell Adams**, Lubbock, TX, along with three nurses, a lab technician, and pharmacists).



It is the youth of Romania that is most open to a study of the Scriptures and accepting the Gospel.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

By the fall of 1990 people were completing the courses and asking for visits and personal study so a three-month long campaign was organized.

Dale McAnulty, former missionary in France, had become interested in the work and made a trip to Romania, preaching in denominational churches across the country. He announced that his family would be moving to Bucharest. In January 1991 a group of approximately 40 American teachers came to the capital city of Bucharest to share the gospel. The teachers conducted classes for about 6 weeks, having so many people wanting to study God's word that large numbers were turned away, some crying. This reception was surprising in a nation that had been Communist-controlled for decades and had been liberated by revolution only two years earlier.



The building owned by the Lord's church in Timisoara. About one third of the 18 congregations have their own place of worship.

The first of many baptisms occurred in February 1991. The short-term workers returned to the states, leaving two couples behind as the first resident workers, **Dale and Imogene McAnulty** and **Gerald and Ann Nichols**. In the next decade, the church in Bucharest grew to become the largest congregation in Europe.

The Nichols later worked two years in Brasov with **Eddie & Ann Neal** and **Roger Grimes**, and started works in several cities. The church was begun in **Sibiu** in 1991, then in **Ploiest** in 1993 when a team of seven mis-

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

sionaries joined the McAnultys. They were **Phil & Rebecca Jackson, Rusty and Karen Andrews, Dale and Sandy Dowling and Marie-Claire LeStunff**. Prior to that time **Dan and Jan Davis** had joined the work in Bucharest and **Tom Hicks** came a few months later. The Davis family spent two years in Bucharest, then a year in the states and returned to **Cluj** when the Jacksons moved from Bucharest to Cluj to start the work there in 1997.

The **Brasov** and **Timisoara** works began in 1992. **Larry Williams** of the **Pleasant Valley** congregation in Little Rock, AR accepted responsibility for the correspondence ministry begun in 1990. Other workers who had a major impact on the early years were **Ken & Betty Davis** who spent about four years total, **Hilton & Wanda Terry, Eugene & Henreitte Smith, Emmet Smith, and Jimmy Wood**.

In May of 1998, the **Terry Smiths** were sent by the **Grant Street Church of Christ** in Decatur, Alabama to Timisoara. The church had already been established in that city, but it was to serve as a spring board for beginning a congregation in Arad.

The Smiths engaged a **World English** student, **Gabriel Ciuras**, as the translator for worship services and personal Bible studies. During the following months they cultivated deepening relationships with their WEI students and with other contacts who attended the weekly worship services. **Carrel Anderson**, and the **University Church of Christ** in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, held a week-long Medical Clinic which was free of charge to the Romanian people. Two doctors treated more than 500 patients. Bible stud-



People's Palace

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

ies were also held during the day, and **Barry Hendrix**, Outreach Minister from University Church of Christ, preached each evening. The attendance began with thirty the first night and climbed to more than eighty by Sunday. A vacation Bible school conducted by **Mike King** and members of the **Grant Street** congregation in Decatur, Alabama added to the evangelistic thrust, and Arad's first baptisms took place in July of 1999.

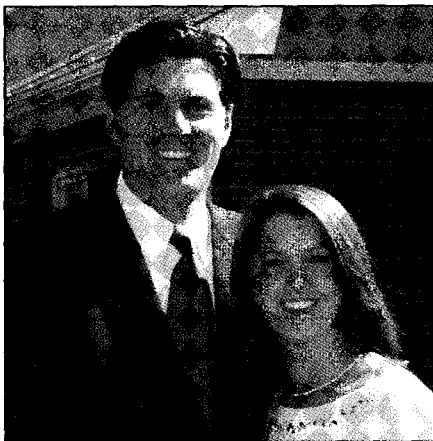
Initial evangelism in **Iasi**, after the fall of communism, was done by **Bill White, David Sanders, Dr. Robin Worsham** and **Jacob Thompson** through conversational English courses by mail and short-term teaching teams in the field. In the summer of 1994, Sanders and White went to Iasi and stayed two and three months respectively, studying with students who had taken the English course. One very special student, **Maria Granic**, completed the mail correspondence course and in the spring of 1998 brother White was able to return and to baptize her into Christ.

Maria and her sister, Florentina, soon began the work of translating the three advanced **World English Institute** correspondence booklets into Romanian. Brother White made another trip in the fall of 1998 during which Florentina was immersed.

In July 2000 a team of three couples including **Daren, Julie and Braden Schroeder, Paul, Rachel and Jewell Marie Holland**, and **Eric, Stephanie and Ethan Welch** moved to Iasi with a ten-year plan of work.

Bible teachers and preachers from the U.S. go regularly to work with the congregations in **Pitesti** and **Craiova**. Scores have been taught one-to-one Bible studies in both cities since the beginning of these congregations.

Harvey and Vernon Starling, Ted Knight and **Harry Middleton** and **Ray Bean** regularly lead teaching teams to both locations, with additional U.S. preachers and couples being scheduled throughout the year. The Romanian men teach about one Sunday each month and also



Vernon and Carla Starling work in Romania under the oversight of the elders of the Midway church.

FROM THE HEART OF ...



The church in Pitesti now has a 6650 square-foot facility in which to worship and work. Visiting team members are also housed in the building.

conduct the adult Bible classes. Romanian ladies are responsible for the children's Bible classes. Teacher training sessions are conducted regularly for the Romanian Christians who wish to attend and to develop into better Bible class teachers.

The **Midway church** in Jasper, Alabama enabled the Pitesti church to purchase and remodel a building for its worship and work program, through the coordination efforts of **Vernon Starling**. The facility has a 100-seat auditorium with a built-in baptistry and five classrooms for 10-15 students each. It also has six bedrooms for up to ten out-of-town guests, a kitchen facility and small dining area. The location is in the center of town, 100 meters from the most active bus stop. Harvey Starling commented, "So many churches and individuals have helped the Pitesti church grow to this point. Many sacrificed to give on this project and many have gone to teach the gospel in Pitesti. May this be only a stepping stone to building a stronger and greater congregation in Pitesti to the glory of God!"

Current Information

The most recent numbers available indicate there are churches of Christ in 17 cities throughout Romania, with about 500 baptized believers. The effort is truly a comprehensive work, involving various ministries from

FROM THE HEART OF...

throughout the United States and other places. Conversational English as an evangelistic tool is used extensively throughout Romania, using the **Let's Start Talking Program**, **World English Institute**, and **World Bible School**. **Eastern European Missions** has provided needed medical supplies and other assistance, with considerable help from **Partners in Progress** and **Healing Hands International**. Medical mission teams are used as well, with a particularly successful effort being made in **Timisoara**. The church in **Cluj-Napoca** oversees a Bible camp for young people during the summer and works with a nursing home. The church in **Pitesti** has a strong Vacation Bible School each year, while the church in **Ploiesti** focuses on leadership/preacher training. The church in **Bucharest** hosts a conference each fall for the Christians and missionaries in the country. The future of the church in Romania, resulting from God's blessings of these efforts, will surely be a blessing to those who are now Christians, as well as to those who are open to receiving the gospel and are looking for the truth. †



A team of U.S. Bible teachers, with their translators. Many have gone for short-term work in cities throughout the country.

From Slavery to Freedom, the Story of Eleanor Diaconu

Eleonora Diaconu was born June 12, 1935 near Constanta, Romania, to a prosperous farming family. As was true of most Romanians, her parents were Romanian Orthodox. Her father farmed and her mother was a success-

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

ful primary grade school teacher. The family owned some 150 acres of farmland and also hundreds and hundreds of cattle, sheep and pigs.

When Eleonora related the traumatic events of her life, she said, "I shall never forget that awful night of March 2, 1949, when the Communist police came to take me and my parents away from our home, never to return."

Eleonora's father was forced that night to sign over all their possessions to the State and the family left home with only what they could carry. The authorities threatened to send them to Siberia but relented and sent them instead to the city of Pitesti in Arges district. They arrived with no job and with no possessions and were able to survive only by doing any menial tasks they could find. They, along with over 250 other prosperous farmers, were stripped of every possession and civil right.

With emotion and tears at times, Eleanora related how her father was required to report each week to the police, always interrogated and often beaten. Even so, neither he nor the family ever were willing to accept the Communist dogma. They continued to attend the Orthodox Church until the father became disillusioned because of the corruption he saw in the church.

Eleonora married Ion Diaconu at the age of 23 and her only child, a son, was born in 1959. About the time of her marriage, Eleonora ceased attending church. Her view is "neither the Orthodox nor the Evangelical churches really provided the simple gospel of Christ which would give people faith in God. I have never given up my trust in God. He is the Maker of us all and has blessed me, even when life seemed dark."

Eleonora, now a member of the body of Christ, learned of the church through her son whom I had met through a Pitesti taxi driver. He attended church meetings several times and heard the simple gospel. In the summer of 1998 he told his mother about us and encouraged her to go to listen. She visited and began to worship regularly with the church in August, 1998.

She continued her personal study of the Bible and then was taught extensively by **Ted** and **Barbara Knight** in September and October. **Pat Starling** studied with her in November and January, and in February, 1999 she obeyed the gospel. Eleonora, along with many others, rejoiced as Ted baptized her into Christ.

When we asked her to relate the greatest change in Romania and in her life when Communism was ending in 1989, she said, "We were free! We could say and do what we wished without fear!"

Eleonora is now free from her sins in Christ. She is washed by His blood, and she walks with Him in His kingdom by faith. — *Harvey Starling*

Ladies!!! Ladies!!! Ladies!!!

I've been told, "If you want to get something done, ask the ladies to do it!" That statement is true. When we began our literature program in India many years ago we appealed to Ladies' Classes to provide the funds. They responded generously and faithfully, year after year. So I'm asking you again . . .

For the sake of the many people who would learn the truth, here in the USA and abroad, through reading the pages of The Voice of Truth International, we appeal to you who are members of Ladies' Classes in the Lord's church throughout this country to pledge three things to yourself, to God, and to us:

(1) To take up money each month for at least one box: \$25 per month for 35 copies of each quarterly issue of the magazine.

(2) Talk to ladies in one sister congregation and enlist their help.

(3) Use your copies among class members and in doing personal work among friends and contacts, so that they can be a tool of evangelism in your congregation.

Thanks!!! We're waiting to hear from you!

(Return this form in an envelope, along with your check, to the following address)



THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
2148 N. National
Springfield, MO 65803

Att. Byron Nichols

Dear Sirs:

I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. **My address is given below.**

I want to order the complete set of volumes in print (31 issues) for the reduced price of \$78.00. **My address is given below.**

Please send special prices for WBS teachers and their students.

I want to **MAKE A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION** of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. **The address is given below.**

The church has agreed to send \$25.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed. These are to be used in the work of the local church.

Please use my special contribution to send more copies of this issue to the mission fields of the world.

Please accept my check to send a bundle to our missionary. **The address is given below.**

As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

This congregation wants to have 1000 copies (for \$1000 plus shipping) special-printed of the next issue, with our (our missionary's) address, to be shipped directly to us or to him, as per instructions.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____



ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search — 31 (from page 27)

Who Am I? (page 90)

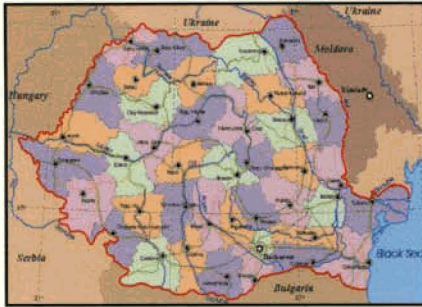
1. He was breathing threats and murder against Christians.
2. *Letters; synagogues; Damascus; the Way; men; women; bring them bound to Jerusalem.*
3. Suddenly a bright light shone around him and a voice challenged what he was doing; he asked, "Who are you, Lord?" and the voice identified itself as that of Jesus; he was told to go into Damascus and await instructions.
4. He was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
5. He had heard of Saul, of the harm he had done to Christians, and of his reason for coming to Damascus.
6. What he must suffer for His name's sake; to bear the Lord's name to Jews and Gentiles throughout the world.
7. That God had sent Ananias to restore his sight and that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit; he said, "*Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*"
8. He preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.
9. "They plotted to kill him."
10. Apostles; had seen the Lord; how he had preached boldly; Damascus.
11. Had peace and were edified; walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit; multiplied.
12. The eunuch said, upon coming to a body of water, "*See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?*"
13. The account of Peter traveling through Lydda and Sharon, healing a man, preaching, and converting many to Christ.
14. Dorcas; Joppa; Peter; healed.
15. "*Became known throughout; Joppa; many believed; Lord.*"
16. Simon the tanner.



Moses

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Romania



Government: Republic
Head of State: President Ion Iliescu
Head of Government:
Prime Minister Adrian Nastase

Information supplied by Harvey Starling, Paul Holland, Gerald Nichols, Eric Welch.

Secular Facts:

Location: Southeast Europe, on the Black Sea, bordered by Moldova on the East, Ukraine on the North, Hungary and Yugoslavia on the West, and Bulgaria on the South.

Land Mass: 91,699 square miles.

Population: 24 million.

Major Cities: Bucharest, Iasi, Constanta.

Language: Romanian, Hungarian, German.

Literacy: 97%; Education is compulsory for ages 6-16.

Religion: Romanian Orthodox, 70%; Roman Catholic, 6%; Protestant, 6%.

Ethnic Groups: Romanian, 89%; Hungarian, 9%.

Economy: *Industries:* Mining, construction materials, metals, machinery, oil products.
Agriculture: Grains, grapes, sugar, beets, potatoes. *Minerals:* Oil, gas, coal, iron.
Communications: TVs: 201 per 1000; Radios: 198 per 1000; Phones, 1 per 7.6 persons;
Transport: 2.39 million passenger cars.

Monetary Unit: Leu.

The Church:

Congregations: 18, with approximately 500 Christians throughout the country.

History: The first mission efforts by the church of Christ to reach people in Romania began in 1900 when Bob Hare, working in Germany, visited the Transylvania region. In 1965, Gwen Hensley, founder of Eastern European Missions in Vienna, Austria, arranged to have tracts and Bibles printed in the Romanian language.

Following the revolution, in 1990, Mike Davido and Don Yelton took a truck load of food and Bibles through Hungary and down to Sibiu. They encouraged Bill McDonough, with *Partners in Progress*, a medical mission effort, to go into the country and offer medical aid to those in critical need of help. The Minister of Health, with whom he met, said that he was the first foreigner in his office.

Through the mission trips of many Americans, and the long-term efforts of some, working through correspondence courses, English courses, gospel meetings and personal evangelism, the church has been planted in many places. Currently, an annual Bible camp is held, an annual two-week leadership school, and preaching and medical campaigns are conducted.