

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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Just a Bible Class

I dreamed the pearly gates were opened wide,
And I entered in, for I had died.
And now must give account for all my acts;
I saw a Book there opened with these facts.
I thought, "My role upon this earth was small,
Just teaching in a Bible school, my call."
For I saw all the saints of God up there,
And mine was, at most, a meager share.
I heard the Master call for my report:
I stood afraid, for mine was short;



I trembled and felt I would not pass,
Then whispered, "I just taught
a Bible class."
And from the throne I heard His voice,
"Well done,
Come in and share eternal life, my son;
Although your place was humble
and obscure,
You led the thirsty to the waters pure."
And then it seemed that from eternal plain,
There came the sound of voices in refrain
That rolled across the mighty sea of glass,
"These are the great – the teachers
of a class."

When I awoke, I thought of those I'd taught,
And in their lives, what glory God had wrought.
I prayed to God, and all that I could say,
"Make me a better teacher day by day."
And you who teach this Christian way to live,
May feel sometimes you're asked too much to give;
But some day you will reap eternal joys.
Because you led to Christ, girls and boys.

Author Unknown

The Voice of Truth International

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Layout Editors: Betty Burton Choate
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Typesetting: Gay Nichols
 Eulene Ramsey
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Spanish Edition:

Managing Editor, Translator: John Thiesen

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"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).

Staff Writers:

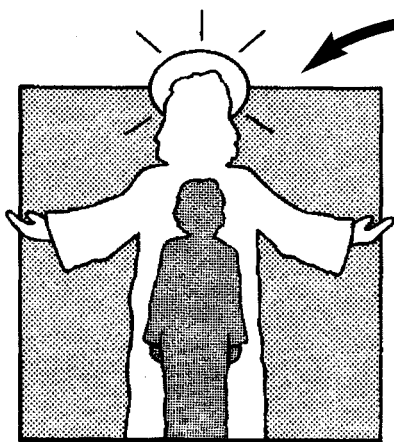
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W. Douglass Harris	

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

Where is salvation?



In Christ

***Therefore, if anyone is
IN CHRIST, he is a
new creation; old
things have passed
away; behold,
all things have
become new
(2 Corinthians 5:17).***

How do we put on Christ?

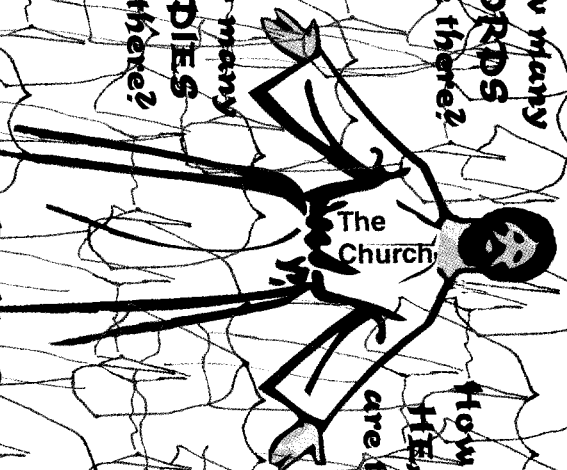
***For as many of you
as were baptized into Christ
have put on Christ.***

Galatians 3:27



How many
 LORDS
are there?

How many
 BODIES
are there?



How many
 HEADS
are there?

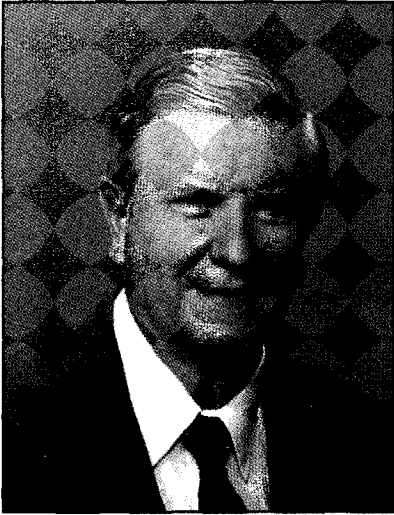
How many CHURCHES are there?

Where do the thousands of denominational groups fit? Christ was not their founder, according to Matthew 16:18 and 7:21-23.1

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all... (Ephesians 4:4-6).

...And He is the head of the body, the church, (Colossians 1:18).

"...for the sake of His body, which is the church..." (Colossians 1:24).



AN OPEN MIND

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

In an age where we have so much knowledge, information, and education, it is tragic that so many people have closed minds. They seem to be satisfied with what they have been taught, even though it is not always based on facts and truth itself. For instance, in the scientific world there is a determination to promote the theory of evolution in spite of the fact that it is totally unscientific,

and is as much a faith-based "religion" as belief in God and creation. The world rejects the truth that a fetus is a human being and proceeds to use all kinds of ghastly methods to kill and destroy unborn babies.

Even in the religious world, most Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, the majority of members of the Catholic church, and most denominational people are not interested in studying the Scriptures with those who differ with them. Are such people afraid of the truth? It would seem that they are unwilling to study and learn, and unwilling to have their thinking and positions challenged, lest they have to admit that they have been wrong and that there is a better way which necessitates CHANGE on their part.

Some people are trying to live in the past. They reject modern inventions and conveniences and still use the horse and buggy as their means of transportation, still use the kerosene lamp for their lighting, still dress and behave as though this is the nineteenth century. Why have they set such boundaries around their lives and refused to even consider accepting the good things available in today's world?

Why do we send our children to school? Not to remain ignorant and unknowledgeable of the things they will need as tools throughout their lives. Rather, they go to school because we want them to know how to read and write, we want them to learn math, to be taught the history of their country

and the world, to learn science, to use a computer, to be taught all of the other things one needs to know to go out into the world and make a living for him/her self and for his/her family.

How quickly in our generation have we become familiar with TV, the video, the fax machine, the computer, E-Mail, the cell phone, the copy machine, shuttle flights, and many other things. Who would not want to learn how to use them and to make them a part of their life?

Those of us who believe the Bible to be the word of God; who accept God as the creator of all things; who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for the sins of the world; who believe that God has given us His word to read and to study to know His will about salvation, the church, worship, the Christian life, and the one way to heaven — how could we be content to accept the confusion and contradictions of the religious world as it is? How could we restrain ourselves from going to the Scripture to be sure that we know what the Lord wants us to do in order to be approved and accepted by Him? Even the so-called “Christian world” is divided into numerous ways to be saved, hundreds and thousands of churches and names to wear, ways to worship, and many ways to heaven. But if the Bible is the truth, how can man get all of

these teachings out it?

How can we know what the truth really is? By reading and studying the word of God for ourselves, and by studying with an open mind with one another. What do we have to lose when we do this? Who wants to be blind, to be deceived, to be in error, and to be lost? Sadly, we may be absolutely satisfied with what we believe, and with the church of which we are members, but if these things are not according to the truths in God’s word, we are still lost.

What if Saul, later called Paul, had been unwilling to acknowledge the Lord when He appeared to him on the road to Damascus? (Acts 9). What if he had refused to accept Him as the Christ, the Son of God, on the basis that he was satisfied with his religion? What if the man from Ethiopia had refused to allow Philip to join him in the chariot and to read and study the word of God as they traveled through the desert? (Acts 8). In the other cases of conversion listed in the book of Acts, what if both men and women had been unwilling to study with the Apostles and others that approached them? Then the book of Acts would be a far different story than what it is, because none of those people would have been converted. They would have gone on through life with their minds closed, and they would have died without Christ.

The scriptures encourage us to study God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), to seek to know the truth (John 8:32), to hear the word of God (Romans 10:17), and to be doers of the word (James 1:22). We are also warned not to be deceived (Galatians 6:7,8), not to follow the teachings of man (Matthew 15:9), and not to hear another gospel (Galatians 1:7-9).

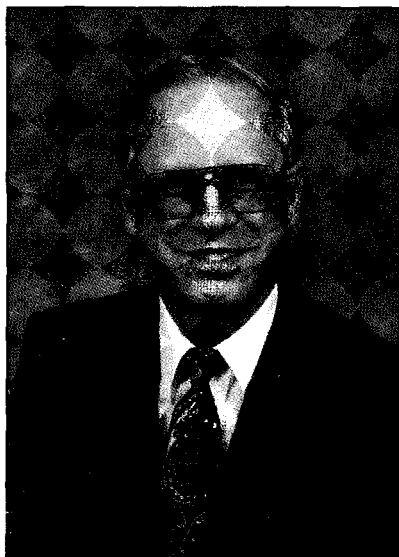
We need to keep an open mind when we study the Bible or when we study with one another. The word of God is the truth and it will not deceive us. It will tell us how to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38); of the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18), that there is but one Family or church (Ephesians 4:4-6), that Christ is its head (Colossians 1:18), that He is its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), that He is the one who died for the church (Ephesians 5:25), He is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), it wears the Lord's name (Acts 4:12; Romans 16:16), it is to worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It tells us that God adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), and that Christ is coming back for it one day (1 Corinthians 15:24).

If I invite you to study with me, don't turn down the invitation on the basis that you are satisfied with what you have. *Even if you believe you have the truth, use this as an opportunity to teach me!* Again, if you believe you understand the truth and that I don't, invite me to study

with you so you can teach me the truth. Anyway you look at it, there is no reason to turn down an opportunity to study God's word or to teach it to others. Those who believe they have the truth should not fear having their faith challenged because the more *real truth* is studied, the brighter and more convincingly it shines. If people are afraid to study, this may be a sign that they don't have the truth, or they can't defend what they believe by the Bible. And if they can't, that is all the more reason why one should *want* to study.

The Bible says that we are to study to know the truth and then to obey it. Once we have done that, we are to teach others.

Keep an open mind. Don't close it with wilful ignorance or self-deceit. Sometimes people try to take comfort in the idea that if they don't study God's word, and don't know what it actually says, then God will surely not condemn them for their failure to do what He has asked. But 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says that when Jesus returns it will be to take vengeance on two groups of people: those who are wilfully ignorant (those "*who know not God*") and those who choose to disobey Him (those "*who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*") which will result in a lost soul — your soul. Please don't make that eternal mistake. †



SOME BIBLICAL TEARS – THEIR CAUSES AND LESSONS

Byron Nichols

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, mention is made of numerous instances of the weeping of even faithful followers of God. Hopefully it will be helpful for us to take a look at just a few instances of these tears, both of anguish and of joy, and then try to draw some appropriate conclusions.

Hezekiah, a great king of Judah, was informed by God through Isaiah that he should “*set his house in order*” (2 Kings 20:1ff.), for he was gravely ill and about to die. The king’s immediate response was to pray to the Lord about his plight and to ask God to remember his faithful service for the Lord. Then we read, “*And Hezekiah wept bitterly*” (verse 3). God heard His noble servant, and He saw his tears. As a result, the Lord extended Hezekiah’s life by fifteen years.

Jeremiah has long been known as “the weeping prophet” because of his constant concern for the faithfulness of God’s people and his deep remorse over their disobedience. God again warned the people through His spokesman Jeremiah, and the prophet then tells the people, “*But if you will not hear it, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock has been taken captive*” (Jeremiah 13:17). Jeremiah was not just a messenger. His was not an attitude of “take it or leave it.” He cared very deeply whether the people “took” it or “left” it.

In Luke 7:36-50 we read about a **sinful woman** who was known for her life of sin, yet she was drawn to Jesus. She came and stood behind Him as He was eating in a reclined position (as was the custom of the day). As she stood there, she was overcome with emotion, causing her to weep profusely,

so much so that her tears wet the Lord's feet. Her love for the goodness and compassion that she witnessed in Him produced a very touching scene as she wiped His feet, anointed them with perfume, and kissed them.

Peter did just what Jesus had told him he would do — he denied the Savior. Hopefully we recall how Peter reacted when he came to realize what he had done. The bold, brazen apostle *"went out and wept bitterly"* (Luke 22:62, also Matthew 26:75 and Mark 14:72), a testimony to the fact of his bitter shame and remorse.

The apostle **Paul** should be known as much for his love and tenderness as his boldness. For example, he reminded the elders from Ephesus in Acts 20:31, *"...and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn every-one night and day with tears."* He also sent this tender message to the church at Corinth: *"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you"* (2 Corinthians 3:4).

The occasion is this: **Jesus** has come back to Jerusalem, the city that He loves so and has pleaded with so much to repent (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34). As He looks down over the city from the Mount of Olives, He is reminded of their refusal to repent and be saved from their sins. Luke then says, *"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it"* (Luke 19:41). In spite of their mistreatment of Him, He still cried because they were lost and without hope.

What can we learn from all of these tears? (1) May we be duly impressed with the fact that God does note the faithfulness of His children, and that He does bless them, not necessarily with extended life, but with those blessings which His wisdom calls for. (2) May we learn to have a passionate concern, not just for our own friends or congregation, but for all of God's children, longing for all of the church to honor Him. (3) May we learn that forgiveness of our sins is indeed the most awesome gift imaginable, and that we have nothing to offer in payment but our unending gratitude and lifelong obedience. (4) May we learn that sin is a disgrace, and that it should result in an intense feeling of shame and a dramatic determination to repent and obey. (5) May we learn to love the church to the extent that we hurt when any part of it is in pain, and to the extent that we would willingly suffer personal loss for the benefit of the church. (6) May we learn to care so much for the lostness of individuals, cities, nations, and the world that we are unable to keep from shedding tears.

Lord, please help Your people to learn these lessons.

†

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The Forgotten Son of God

Bobby Dockery

When my children were small, I gave them a memory verse to learn each week. When the youngest was about four, his verse one week was John 3:16. He had a particularly hard time with one word in that familiar passage — “Begotten.” He kept substituting another similar sounding word:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only forgotten son...”

It occurs to me that in the life of many people that is exactly where Christ is — forgotten! We live in a world which has come unraveled in chaos and descended into savagery because men and women have forgotten the Son of God! Christ has often been forgotten, even by those who claim to honor and serve Him (see Revelation 3:14-20)! Notice some of the ways this can happen:

1) Forgotten in cultural blindness. Jesus accused the church at Laodicea of forgetting Him because they didn't see Him! "*You are blind,*" He said (Revelation 3:17). The condition still exists. Romans 12:2 commands, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...*" There is a constant danger that we will find ourselves listening and looking to the world instead of Jesus because we are constantly bombarded by messages from the world, through newspapers, TV, movies, magazines, people among whom we live and work, etc. It is not at all surprising that many professed Christians begin to think and act more like the world than like Christ. They simply forget about Christ and the Bible when it comes to translating the realities of the Christian faith into daily living!

2) Forgotten in institutional machinery. There is a sense in which people can get so "busy" with "church" work that they forget all about Jesus. Many congregations are top-heavy with organization. The church becomes a collection of committees, meetings, programs, ministries, memos, and related procedures that maintain institutional momentum. Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2) gets lost in the bureaucratic shuffle.

3) Forgotten in our preoccupa-

pation with success. The church at Laodicea had a warped concept of success. They judged by size, growth, wealth, prestige, and power and said, "**We have everything.**" Jesus judged by faithfulness and said, "**You have nothing!**"

Often today's church is more concerned with a false, secular definition of success than with loyalty to Jesus. Is attendance up? Are contributions up? Have we been able to build bigger, finer buildings? Our Lord measures success by faithfulness. In Revelation 3:10 Jesus urged, "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*" He did not say, "Keep growing...meeting your budget...building bigger buildings...until death." He said, "*Be faithful!*"

Our purpose is not to build temples, set attendance records, or retire the church debt; it is to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified! We must be "*steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Our great need is to get Jesus back at the center of our lives. He says, "*Behold I stand at the door and knock*"...with wealth for your poverty...with sight for your blindness...with robes of purity for your nakedness. Will you open???

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

That Resurrection Day

Hershel Dyer

Never did a day begin with such gloom and end with such glow! Those faithful women who had viewed the crucifixion from afar were now making their way to the garden plot where the body of Jesus had been tenderly laid. They were wondering how they would manage to roll aside the stone which blocked the entrance to the cave-like tomb.

The anguish of the stark tragedy which they had so lately witnessed was bearing heavily upon their minds. With aromatic ointments they proceeded to the burial site, ready to do this final service for their beloved Master. How amazed and how joyous they were upon hearing the angelic words: "He is not here, for He is risen!"

That same day, two of the men were on the road to Emmaus. The now risen Jesus joined their company and inquired as to their sorrowful looks and conversation. Not recognizing Him, they told of their Master's suffering and death, also of their Messianic expectations surrounding Jesus which now seemed shattered.

His exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the prophesied Messiah held them in spellbound fascination. After he separated from them, they rushed back to Jerusalem to hear the other disciples saying what they now knew: "The Lord is risen, indeed!" (Luke 24:34).

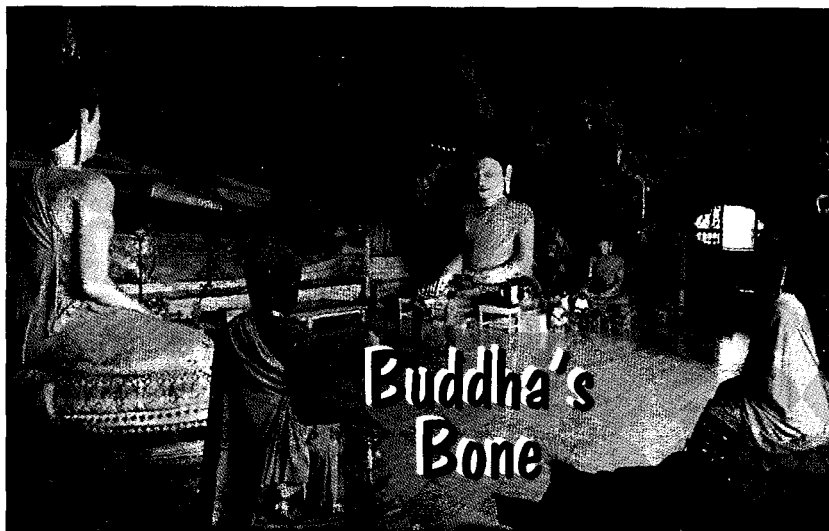
Yes, it was a day of gloomy sadness that soon brightened into a day of glowing gladness. Not only were the lost hopes of those living disciples gloriously restored, but their message has resounded with hope through all generations since.

We gazed not in the open tomb,
Where once Thy mangled body lay,
Nor saw Thee in that "upper room"
Nor met Thee on the open way.

But we believe that angels said,
"Why seek the living with the dead?"
But we believe that angels said,
"Why seek the living with the dead?"



Hershel Dyer is a long-time gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.



Edward Short

A very unusual discovery was made in May of 1986 in the Famen Temple in Fufeng County, Shaanxi Province of China. This is about 118 km from Xi'an where the famous terra cotta soldiers from the Chin Dynasty were unearthed in 1974. The discovery gave archaeologists, historians and Buddhists much excitement.

The Famen Temple was built between A.D. 200-300, but was later destroyed and rebuilt. It was very prominent for a lengthy period of Chinese history and it gained favor and support of royalty, high-ranking officials and celebrities. After the 10th century, the temple began to fade into obscurity however. An earthquake and heavy rain-

fall caused it to partially collapse in 1981. When the temple was being rebuilt in April of 1986, a large crypt was discovered. This crypt had been sealed in A.D. 874 and left undisturbed for over one thousand years. The archeologists and Buddhists alike wondered what secrets, antiques and relics the crypt might contain!

The Beijing Review (September 7, 1987) described in detail what was found inside the crypt: A casket decorated with 45 gilded images of Buddha and engraved with elegant Chinese characters. Inside this larger casket was a niche in the rear chamber, containing a small iron casket, wrapped in gold-colored silk. When this box was opened, a

GOD

smaller sandalwood box was revealed inside. Inside this was a crystal box inlaid with a yellow gem at one end and a blue gem at the other, each surrounded by pearls. Lastly, a jade box was removed.

When the jade box was opened on May 10, 1986, archeologists found inside it four bones. After intense examination, it was determined that three of the four bones were 'sacred copies' of the real thing. But the fourth bone was accepted by Zhao

to this day.

Jesus, on the other hand, "*was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption*" (Acts 2:31,32). His bones have never been found, and will never be found, because **God raised Him from the dead!**

By overcoming death, Jesus proved that He is the Son of God (Romans 1:4), that He himself had no sin (Romans 6:23), and that He can forgive the sins of others (Acts 13:37,38).

Jesus' bones have never been found anywhere, and will never be found, because God raised Him from the dead!

Puchu, chairman of the Chinese Buddhists' Association, as *the true finger bone of Siddhartha Gautama* (Sakyamuni), the Buddha and founder of Buddhism, who died about 483 B.C. Zhao confirmed to the modern world what the inscription on the outer casket had stated: "This precious casket which contains the genuine finger bone of Sakyamuni is presented by the Tang Emperor."

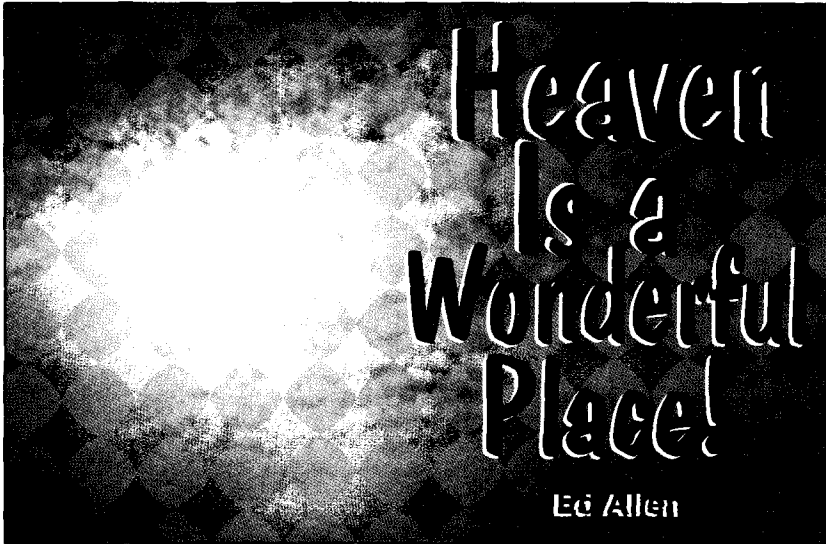
I'm confident that it is very edifying to Buddhists all over the world that one bone from one finger of the founder of their religion has been unearthed in China. But this discovery makes Christians very happy also. In fact, the truth of the discovery is at once obvious to Christians: **Buddha died, was buried and his bones are with us**

Jesus' resurrection proves that Christians need not fear death as other people do (1 Timothy 4:6-8), and that all people will one day be judged by the God of the universe (Acts 17:31).

Siddhartha Gautama was a great person and many Buddhists are very sincere in their religion, but the truth is that Buddhists worship a dead man. Christians, on the other hand, worship a resurrected and living Savior!

We invite you to study the teachings and truth concerning Jesus Christ. †

Edward Short served as a missionary for the Lord's church in Taiwan for many years. He now works with World Broadcasting and lives in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.



Heaven is a place we seldom hear about anymore from the pulpit. My life and travels recently have caused me to think a great deal about Heaven.

Last month I was in Oklahoma for a reunion with several families with whom I had grown up. We had gathered from all over the country. Some had taken off from work, left chores undone, come from hundreds of miles, and spent hours in the car with screaming kids so that we could get together for a few meals, some fellowship and to get reacquainted with each other.

As the two days progressed, we all realized that we had to do this more often, that the time we had together was too limited. Some had to leave after the first day. Some

were unable to attend at all and we missed them. We were also sad they were missing something so wonderfully special.

That time was special because the people I was with are special to me. They are intimately familiar with me and my life. They know me as few of my friends now know me. We had laughed together, cried together, graduated together, knew each other's boyfriends and girlfriends, roomed together at college, were in each other's weddings, kept tabs as babies were born, and we have attended funerals together. Everything about me there is to know, they know. Everything about them, I know.

Life takes us and our friends in different directions. Often people we

GOD

love move on, and we miss that bond of closeness. But, for the Christian, there is always the hope of Heaven.

Earthly reunions are special, but Heaven will be a place unlike any reunion we've ever attended. There will be people we meet for the first time, people we have known along life's journey, people we love, but that won't be the best part of Heaven.

Heaven will be a place without sorrow, tears and pain, but that won't be the best thing about Heaven.

Heaven will be a place of endless day, where there will be no night. The reunion and painless environment Heaven offers will never end. Never. But, once again, its eternal nature will not be the best part of Heaven.

Heaven will be a place of eternal rest and reward. A place where the struggles of this life do not exist and cannot reach us. In Heaven people cannot let you down or hurt you. However, that is still not the best part of Heaven.

The best part will be something we cannot fathom. The best part will be that Heaven is where God is, and we will be with Him there forever. His glory will illuminate Heaven. His praises will be sung in Heaven. Jesus will be at His right hand. Heaven is the place we will meet our Creator, our Maker, the Author of the Bible.

I would give anything to be in Heaven with God. What does He want from me? My life. God asks for

your life, too. In exchange for eternal salvation and a place in Heaven with Him, He asks you to give up who you are and to become who He would have you to be.

The cost is too high for some. To them, their choice of lifestyle is worth more than God offers in return. That's tragic, but it's their decision.

But there are other people in this world who don't know there is a choice to be made. Satan has convinced them they are free to think and believe whatever they choose. "I'm OK, you're OK."

While God has given us the ability to make choices, He wants us to choose righteously. These people need to be told. They need us.

We have to tell them about God's message, God's plan and about Heaven. Heaven is a place God is, a place of eternal day, a place of no pain, no sorrow, no tears and a place where we will be reunited with loved ones. Who in their right mind would miss something that special?

The truth is some people don't even realize it is *a reality* and that they *might* miss it. The task is ours to inform them of its existence, of its promise and of its entry requirements.

Get started today! Tell everyone you know about your hope, God, Jesus and Heaven! †

Ed Allen works with the Truth in Love television network, sponsored by the church of Christ in Hurst, Texas, USA.

Evidences

The story is told of a man who met a little boy on the street one day and made him a significant challenge: "Little boy, I will give you all the money that I have in my pocket if you will show me where God is!" The little boy replied, "Sir, I will give you all the money that I have in my pocket if you will show me where God ain't!" It is much more difficult to provide proof for the absence of God in our universe than it is to prove His presence.

Christians must *"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15). Surely, this would be the case with our confidence in the existence of the God of heaven. It's an odd thing, but seldom do I hear the existence or presence of Satan in the world being disputed! Why is God doubted, when Satan is not?

David observed, *"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God"* (Psalm 14:1). To deny the existence of God is to deny the human dignity of man, for without God, man is just an animal. There were those in Rome who were *"Professing themselves to be wise"* but, *"they*

became fools" (Romans 1:22). One can readily understand why this was so from the following verses. They *"changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things...and worshiped and served the creature more than the creator"* (verses 23, 25).

How obvious is the existence of God? Inspiration records that *"the invisible things of him since the creation of the*

world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity" and declares that those who believe otherwise and live accordingly are *"without excuse"* (Romans 1:20).

God's presence in the world is obvious because of the existence of the universe and life. We must not let mere chance serve as a feeble explanation about how things occurred. David marveled because *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1).

Furthermore, the orderliness and regularity of nature argue for

The Obviousness of God

Michael L. King

Evidences

the divine intelligence of a powerful, infinite, and omniscient God.

The possession of moral ideas of right and wrong shows the presence of a Supreme Being. There is an innate sense of duty or “oughtness” making man morally responsible. The Romans changed and violated that which was “*natural*,” such as their “*natural affection*,” to be “*filled with all unrighteousness*” (Romans 1:26,29). Man is engineered so that he naturally seeks a moral law to regulate himself, he seeks to do the right things, and to make the world a better place.

God’s presence in humanity is obvious through man’s religious nature and longing for God. “*God that made the world and all things therein...he giveth to all life, breath, and all things: having determined...the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord,*” after all, “*we are also his offspring*” (Acts 17:24-28).

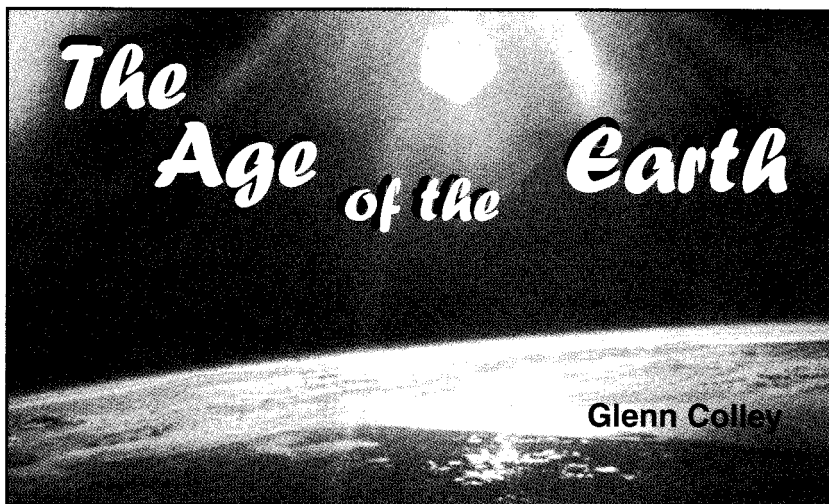
There has never been a culture discovered that did not believe in some form of a Supreme Being. Without exception, all civilizations have practiced some form of religion. The concept of God must have come either from **observation**, **experience**, or **divine revelation**. It is unthinkable that man on his own would formulate the kind of God we find in the Scriptures. If the idea of God were man-made, man would not

have denied himself absolute freedom to do as he wanted by creating for himself a moral God to whom he must be accountable for his deeds — a God who demands allegiance to Himself, imposes moral behavior, and then warns of condemnation for violation of His law.

One of the strongest arguments for the existence of God is the coming of His son Jesus. The physical presence (incarnation) of Jesus with humanity constituted the meeting between heaven and earth. The coming of Jesus was God’s means of manifesting Himself in an observable, believable, and seeable form, to create a link between flesh and spirit. Jesus was “*God made manifest in the flesh*” (1 Timothy 3:16).

The Hebrews writer emphatically declared that his readers were “*compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*,” so they should be “*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher (perfecter) of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:1,2). It makes good sense for us to look to Jesus, for in doing so, we are able to envision God. Jesus left many footprints on earth by which man can believe (John 20:30,31). Faith’s evidences are to be found in God’s inspired Word, for “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). There is a God! †

Michael L. King preaches the Gospel in Jacksonville, Florida, USA.



How old is the earth? There are a number of interesting figures always floating around and changing. Some theistic evolutionists say the universe is about 20 billion years old, while the earth itself is about 4.5 billion years old. They are called *theistic evolutionists* because they believe in God and a very old earth at the same time. Although the Bible declares a young earth, they seek to read between the lines to find eons of evolutionary time. Some hold to a gap theory, suggesting that there were millions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2:

Genesis 1:1 – *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*

Genesis 1:2 – *“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the*

deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

Others use their imagination and claim that the six days in which God created our world were not 24 hour days as we know them, but rather days containing millions of years. Quite a stretch indeed. Read Exodus 20:8-11: *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”*

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I should say at this point that if the Bible did not address this question, I would not care one whit about the age of the material universe. I know it will be destroyed when the trumpet blows, and that is enough for me (2 Peter 3:10). And yet, the Bible does give some compelling insight into the age of the earth. Let's continue.

Adam was the first man created. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:45-47, *"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."*

Jesus told us that Adam was made at the beginning of the creation, not millions of years after it began: *"But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female"* (Mark 10:6). Jesus, who is the Word of God, is certainly a reliable source, because He was there. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God"* (John 1:1,2).

What this demonstrates is that humanity and the earth are approximately the same age. Now to the next step. Just how old is humanity?

Luke 3:23-38 spells out the fami-

ly tree from Christ all the way back to Adam. You will count seventy-five generations. If you allow a random but generous sixty years for each generation, that comes to 4500 years from Adam to Christ. From Christ to present day is 2000 years, thus, the earth's age should be measured in thousands of years, not billions.

Most who look at this the first time still wonder how the scientific age of the earth testing could be so wrong. Can't scientists prove that some rock formations are much older than a few thousand years? Yes they can, but that doesn't affect the truth of the Scriptures. For you see, God did not create an earth bearing evidence of a brand new world, but an old one. Adam was not created as a baby, but a full-grown man, ready for marriage! When he was one minute old he was fully grown. Eve was likewise a grown woman the moment she took her first breath. The trees in the lush garden of Eden no doubt bore the circles of many years in their trunks, yet were freshly created. The animals created on the sixth day were already mature. So it was with the rest of the earth — brand new, but fully mature, bearing the marks of a longer existence.

Our world is not really that old after all. †

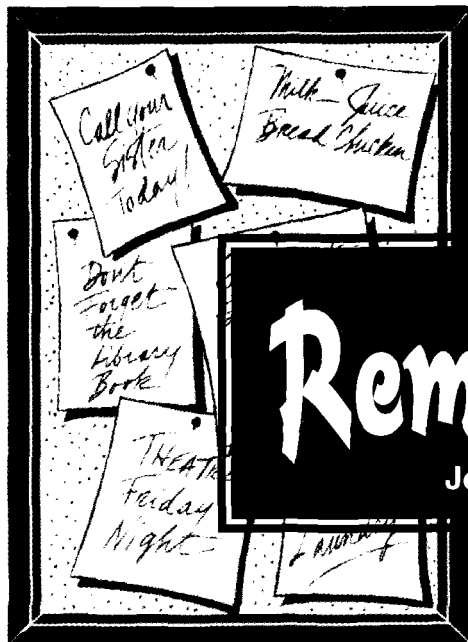
Glenn Colley is the preacher for the Collierville Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

Verse Search

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

1. Jewish Christian men from Judea came down to Antioch and were teaching what? (V. 1).
2. Who disagreed with them? (V. 2).
3. The church at Antioch sent them where, to question this teaching? (Vs. 2,3).
4. Even in Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees were doing what? (V. 5).
5. In response to their demands, at the meeting of the apostles and elders, what story did Peter recount? (Vs. 6-11).
6. What sign had God given, to convince Peter that He was accepting Gentiles into the faith? (V. 8).
7. When the Pharisaical Christians added to God's requirements for salvation, what did Peter say they were actually doing? (V. 10).
8. James, the brother of the Lord, made reference to what two "witnesses" to corroborate Peter's argument? (Vs. 13-17).
9. James suggested that they write instructions to Gentile Christians, instructing them to do what three things? (Vs. 19,20).
10. This suggestion pleased the church, so they wrote the letter and sent what two men with Paul and Barnabas to deliver it? (V. 22).
11. Though the letter was addressed to particular Christians, does it apply in similar circumstances today? Does the example of "making laws more stringent than God has made them" also serve as a warning to people of all places and all times?
12. What did Judas and Silas do while in Antioch? (V. 32).
13. When Judas returned to Jerusalem, what did Silas do? (Vs. 33,34).
14. Paul said what to Barnabas? (V. 36).
15. Barnabas wanted to take along his nephew, _____ (V. 37).
16. Why did Paul object? Who went with Paul, and where did they go? (V. 38-41).

[See inside of back cover for answers.]



"Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Reminders

Joe C. Magee

Peter had just exhorted his readers to *"be diligent to make their calling and election sure"* (verse 10). He knew that

they knew how and what they should do to maintain their faith. In this passage he pressed the importance of being reminded.

We appreciate the value of reminders. We write ourselves little notes. We make lists of things needed and deeds to be done. Reminders in this life range from note pads to wedding bands. How much more precious are the things that remind us of the grace of God, the sacrifice of His Son, and the promise of eternal life.

How careless and indifferent we can become if we neglect to be reminded. Paul wrote that we should *"study to show ourselves approved"* (2 Timothy 2:15). While that study may take us over the texts which we have read before, there is also the reminder of what we should do to maintain a steadfast faith.

There are those in the religious world who neglect the reminders that have been given us. For example, they often criticize the church for our frequency in partaking of the Lord's Supper. But Paul wrote, *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). Not only does the Supper remind us of His suffering, but

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also His promise of coming again.

There are those who have neglected the Word of God for so long they have lost their appreciation for its authority. In fact, they have lost their reminder that it is **the** authority. They have fallen for the doctrine of consumerism ("What fits my desires is what I want in matters of religion") until they no longer care what the Scriptures teach. They scoff at the commandment to be baptized. They substitute sprinkling or pouring for immersion, though the necessity of immersion is clearly taught in the Scriptures (Romans 6:3-4). They divorce and remarry for every reason under the sun and think that God will overlook it because He is "surely broad-minded enough to understand my situation."

Where in the Bible do we read that God is broadminded? Where do we read that He ever sought the wisdom of man? We need to be reminded that God is all-powerful, all-wise, and ever-present. We need the reminder that His "*Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway*" (Psalm 119:105).

We need God. We need the instructions in **His** Word. He does not need **our** suggestions.

Let us be wise enough to welcome being reminded. †

Joe C. Magee preaches the Gospel of Christ in Yale, Oklahoma, USA.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'BORN AGAIN'?

Many religions grow in numbers primarily through the physical birth of children to parents. Automatically, and without any choice made by the children, the religion of the parents becomes theirs as well.

Physical birth does not make a person a Christian. We must *choose* to be in God's Family, and then we must be 'born again' — a **spiritual birth** — in order to have God as our Father and Jesus as our elder brother. The choice is made through *belief in Jesus as God's Son* and then our decision to leave the sinful life of the world, which is repentance. The actual birth takes place in baptism, as we are born of water (baptism) and the Spirit (the renewal of our spiritual relationship with God), becoming "*...a new creation in Christ...old things have passed away; behold all things have become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Sin kills us spiritually. All people have sinned, therefore all have died in sin, and we cannot have new spiritual life in Christ without being 'born again'.

NEXT: What Follows Baptism?

Let Him Be Accursed

Loy Mitchell

"But if we or a heavenly angel should proclaim a gospel contrary to the gospel which we proclaimed, let him be accursed. As we have previously said, now I repeat: if anyone proclaims a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9)

What was the Problem? The congregations of Galatia were forsaking the One who had called them through the Gospel of Christ and they were turning to a different gospel (verse 5). Paul was at a loss to understand their deserting the grace of God found in Jesus and turning so quickly to a gospel which was really not a gospel or good news at all. The message Paul had preached to them about Jesus Christ and Him crucified was now being distorted. These men troubling the Galatian Christians were teaching that one must be circumcised to be saved and that one must keep Moses' law.

What was the message Paul had preached in Galatia? It was the same message he had preached everywhere. *"He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present wicked world, according to the will of God our Father" (Galatians 1:4). "We preach Christ crucified: to the Jews*

a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23). "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). "...For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any merit, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). "May I not boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:14,15).

What would be the punishment to those who would preach a different gospel? The Greek word here is translated as "accursed". It denotes in this passage an alienation from God, or spiritual death. Anyone, including Paul or an angel who would preach a gospel different from what Paul had proclaimed, would be accursed. Those who

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would preach a gospel contrary to Paul's message of salvation in Christ Jesus and Him alone, would be accursed.

Brethren, let us heed the warnings of Scripture. Let us teach the same Gospel of Christ. This Gospel has **facts** to be learned and believed. It has **commands** to be obeyed and **promises** to be enjoyed. Dare we change His Gospel? If we do, we do so to our own condemnation.

Read the book of Acts. What did people do when they heard the message taught? Did they not **believe** this message, **repent** of their sins and **be baptized** (Acts 2:37-41; 8:12,13; 8:35-40)? Let us heed the warnings given in the Word of God so that we and all those who hear the message may be saved. †

Loy Mitchell, former missionary to Zimbabwe, now preaches for the Northside congregation in Topeka, Kansas, USA.

The Holy Ash Heaps

After the middle ages, just outside the old city of Jerusalem, north of where the temple once stood, there were the "Holy Ash Heaps". Tradition said they were the remains of ashes dumped from the millions of animal sacrifices offered at the temple. During those centuries, the ashes became a kind of holy relic linking the present with the biblical past. A steady stream of pilgrims visited the heaps to fill boxes or vials with some of those leftovers from the temple.

During the nineteenth century, however, as new building sprang up outside the old city walls, builders began to expropriate the ashes for the making of cement. By 1900 the heaps had disappeared, but not before archeological tests had shown them to be not ancient but only the rubbish of a long-forgotten soap factory.

Through centuries there accumulated in the environs of Christendom a heap of practices and beliefs which do not date back to the days of the apostles. And although these might be revered as ancient and old, they are not the remains of First-Century Christianity.

Going back to the Bible helps one to see the differences between genuine doctrines of the apostolic church and latter **"soap factory ashes"**. ***"Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent."*** — Marlin Connelly



Eloquent Silence

Roy Beasley

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds..." (Hebrews 1:1,2).

God has spoken. Isn't that a wonderful thought! God has taken the time and the effort to speak to man, showing how highly He regards man. But, how has God spoken?

In the past, at "*sundry times*" He spoke in "*divers manners*", says the writer of Hebrews, through dreams and visions, and even directly when there was a need. But now, in these last days, He has chosen to speak to us through His Son Jesus Christ.

We have the message of Christ, recorded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as He guided the apostles and other inspired writers of the New Testament. In this Christian age, we are living under the new covenant, which is the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God appointed Him personally as His spokesman on earth. At the transfiguration, God said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him*" (Matthew 17:5). And Jesus claimed to possess "*all authority in heaven and on earth*" (Matthew 28:18). When He speaks, we must listen, because His words are from God.

But there is another way that God speaks to us today. It is by His silence. In this manner, too — through eloquent silence — God often conveys His will. It is eloquent silence.

We respect every word that God speaks. We must also respect His silence. As the early preachers of the American Restoration movement affirmed: we must "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent."

But how does God speak through His silence? Observe His legislation concerning the Levitical priesthood, as is set forth in Hebrews 7:12-14: "*For*

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the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity the change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."

This passage gives emphasis to the fact that Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood as it pertained to the tribe of Judah. God had said that the priests were to be taken from the tribe of Levi. He did not go down the list and say, "Do not take priests from the tribe of Judah; do not take priests from the tribe of Benjamin; do not take priests from the tribe of Ephraim, etc." All God needed to say was to select priests from the tribe of Levi, and the children of Israel knew what that meant.

Thus, the implication of Hebrews 7:12-14 is quite clear — no man from the tribe of Judah was allowed to serve as a priest and give attendance at the altar during the Mosaic period. Why? Because of *the silence* of the Law regarding such a practice. God's commands through Moses said nothing that would authorize men from the tribe of Judah or any of the other tribes to serve as priests. Consequently for someone other than of the tribe of Levi to serve as priest would be without divine authority. The command *included* the tribe of Levi; the

silence of God *excluded* the tribe of Judah and every other tribe.

In 1 Samuel 13 we have an example of Saul, who did not respect the silence of God. Saul was to wait for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice. Saul waited, and Samuel delayed his coming. Saul got impatient and went ahead and offered the sacrifice himself. Saul was the king, but he was not a priest. He could not be a priest, because he was of the tribe of Benjamin and not of the tribe of Levi.

When Samuel came, he rebuked Saul severely: "*Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commended thee...*" (v. 13). Because of this presumptuous sin Saul's kingdom was taken away from him.

What had Saul done that was so wrong? You might say that he had good intentions. What he did seemed logical to him, perhaps, and maybe he was sincere. Nowhere had God specifically stated that a member of the tribe of Benjamin *could not* act as a substitute priest in the *absence* of Samuel. Yes, all that may be true, but Saul's fatal mistake was that he did not respect *the silence of God*. Saul **spoke** where God was **silent**.

May we show the proper respect for God by honoring both His words *and* His silence. †

Roy Beasley is Executive Director of Restoration Radio Network in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

Grace, and Works of Faith

Frank Chesser

Naaman was a leper. He was instructed by Elisha the prophet to dip seven times in the river Jordan. When he complied with the specified condition, "*his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean*" (2 Kings 5:14). Was it not essential for Naaman to submit to the prophet's instructions in order to be healed of his leprosy? Did not Naaman's obedience involve human effort? Was the power to heal in the water of Jordan? Did Naaman's obedience of faith repeal God's grace and transform his gift of healing into human merit?

Initially, Naaman refused to comply with God's instructions through the prophet. His refusal left him a leper. Of course he **had to obey God**. He was not healed until his faith became visible in action. "*Show me thy faith*" (James 2:18). The water of Jordan was impotent as far as Naaman's leprosy was concerned. The power to heal was God's alone. In his obedience of faith, Naaman was not attempting to nullify grace, he was **cooperating with grace**. His trust for healing was not in the Jordan, nor his dipping therein, though both were necessary. His trust was in God, in His

grace, and in His power to heal. However, it was Naaman's obedient faith that enabled him to appropriate the blessings of God's grace and power to his disease-ridden body.

It is imperative that we discern the distinction between works of merit and works of faith. **Works of merit** have man trusting in himself and his own efforts. Such an attitude nullifies grace and leads to self-righteousness. The Pharisee of Luke 18:10-12 is a classic example. It was this very kind of works that Paul had in mind when he said, "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*" (Romans 4:4); again, "*Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:9).

Conversely, **works of faith** have man trusting in God, His grace, and the provisions thereof in Christ and the cross. Though acknowledging the necessity of submitting to such divinely ordained words, man's trust is not in himself, nor his performance of works. God is the sole object of his trust. These are the works of James 2:14-26. †

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Panama Street Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

"THE Restoration Movement" — a Misnomer?

Betty Burton Choate

In the US we read a lot and hear a lot about "THE Restoration Movement", as though there was only one such event in history, and as though its beginning and end can be pinpointed in time. This type of thinking and of labeling has resulted in such statements as "Our commitment to the Restoration principles", "Our Restoration heritage", and "The founders of the Restoration Movement".

Such thinking has left many American Christians with two (perhaps unrecognized) erroneous lines of thought:

(1) That the Lord's church had "died out" during the "falling away" which resulted in the Catholic church at the beginning of the seventh century. Many would reason that the only way the true church existed in "the Dark Ages" was "in the written word".

(2) That the modern American "Church of Christ" actually BEGAN in the process of the Restoration Movement. If this were true, it would be no more than one of the denominational

groups that resulted from "The Reformation Movement", groups that have hopelessly splintered believers in Christ.

Actually, the idea of and verbalization about "THE Restoration Movement" betray a highly localized view of the church. Look from the other side of the world, look from other points in time and from other points of development, and the singularity of the event disappears.

Congregational efforts to "get back to truth" have waxed and waned throughout the world and throughout time. No, the Lord's church did not disappear off the face of the earth with the "falling away". Jesus had declared in Matthew 16:18 that even the gates of hell could not prevail against His church. Daniel had assured all that, once that kingdom had been established, it would stand forever (Daniel 2:44).

So throughout the Christian era, there have been true Christians in the world. Sometimes the records of their existence are scarce, sometimes the evidence is greater, but God has never been left without His

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people to represent Him among humanity.

Out of massive error, in the 1700's and 1800's many people in North America returned to the Scriptures. In India there has been an awakening since the middle of this century. Christians in England struggled against persecution because of their defense of truth from the 1100's onward. Hundreds of thousands in Africa have been choosing the truth in recent years. "Movements" take place at different times in different places, and none are ever really completed.

In each case in history, churches *grow toward perfection* in their teaching and implementation of the whole of the New Testament message. Individuals are *growing toward perfection* in their own understanding and implementation of the New Testament message.

Sometimes we speak of "restoring first century Christianity", or "being like the first century church". But think about those statements. Which local congregation, as described in the New Testament, was exactly as it should have been? If we had lived in Jerusalem at the time of Paul's visit there in Acts 21:20-25, would we not have felt that the leadership was jeopardizing the purity of truth by compromising with the Jewish Christians?

If we had worshiped with the churches of Galatia, would we have concluded that they had fallen away from the faith by following the Judaizing teachers in their midst?

If we could be suddenly transported back to Corinth, would we not insist that they needed a "restoration movement" to bring them back to the true faith on many subjects? Would we fellowship them?

What is my point? That our commitment is not to "THE Restoration Movement" or even to "The New Testament Church" (which was made up of *imperfect* humans *imperfectly* implementing a *perfect* set of principles), but rather we must be committed to **the laws, principles, and guidelines revealed in the New Testament by inspiration of the Holy Spirit**. The pattern given by God is perfect and never needs a restoration; but any **copy** of the pattern by imperfect individuals and groups of individuals will inevitably fall short and *must not be copied*.

Learning the doctrine and living the life are two entirely different things. Proof of this point is all around us: Though being born into the Family can be easily achieved, one Christian may grow well in his prayer and worship life, but may fail miserably in learning to "turn the other cheek" or to "love his enemies". He may work hard and

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

never lie, but be tight-fisted in contributions. Maybe he takes part in every meeting or activity of the church but never bears any fruit to God. Or maybe, as the years pass, he grows to a sweet and full maturity in Christ, exemplary of what Christianity is all about.

Individual congregations may beautifully achieve the spiritual family relationship God's word describes, but may not be focussed on sharing that life with the world. Churches may teach the basic truths of the gospel, and they may assemble regularly, yet be little more than social clubs. They may offer a full range of activities to the members, but have little or no concern about the real spiritual welfare of individual Christians.

Or there is an even more basic illustration: Go back to the doorway of entrance into the church — to the doctrine of *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"*. We believe and obey this command. But in the same breath Jesus said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15,16). The same Jesus also said very clearly, *"...he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit..."* (John 15:5). These are direct commands. They tell us that Christians are in the world for a *purpose*, and that this saving of souls is to be *our primary focus*, individually and collectively.

Yet, how many congregations have the evangelization of the world as the **top priority** in their work and in their budget? (According to statistics, on average, only 2% of church budgets is allocated to evangelism — 3% to benevolence, and 95% to maintaining SELF). Have congregations "restored" obedience to this elementary command?

And how many individual Christians live an entire lifetime without ever once **trying** to convert another soul? Have we gone all the way back to the **doctrine** of the New Testament when these commands are being ignored?

In answer, I return to my original point: "THE" Restoration Movement is a misnomer, on two counts: (1) "restoration" is not a "past tense" fact, but an on-going one. And (2) though we have understood and accepted many vital truths, most Christians and congregations of the Lord's church are even now blinded to the fact that evangelism is to take priority in our work for God.

As long as we are in this world, and as long as the world stands, the "movement" back to truth must be an individual and persistent one. God help us to be committed to truth, rather than to a localized "movement". †

Betty Burton Choate is a Christian living in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

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.

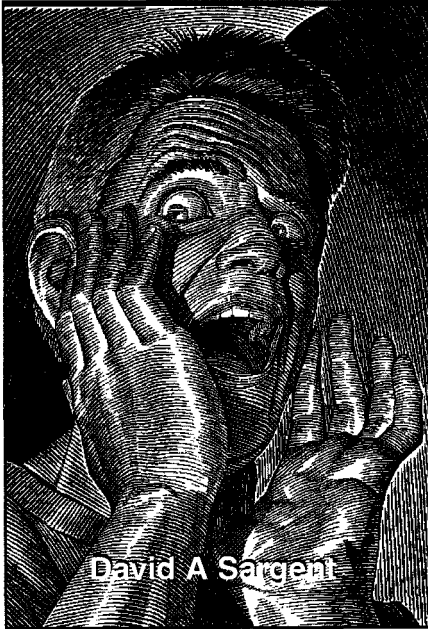
When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word.

1. **100** Because I ate some honey, my father would have killed me if the people had not intervened (1 Samuel 14:45).
2. **90** Though God had worked no evident miracle, I had the faith to put my life on the line in a one-sided battle (14:6-14).
3. **80** Because of my example and courage, my people won a great victory (14:45).
4. **70** I was a man of sterling character and a devoted friend throughout my life (1 Samuel 18-20).
5. **60** Though I was the son of the king, I was not envious when God chose another to be king instead of me (20:13).
6. **50** The Scriptures record of me that I loved my friend "*as my own soul*" (20:17).
7. **40** My friend and I made a vow to each other to take care of the other's family, in case of death (20:14,15,42).
8. **30** I helped my friend escape from my father, even at risk to my own life (1 Samuel 20).
9. **20** My father, two brothers, and I died in a battle on Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31).
10. **10** I had a young son who was injured when his nurse ran away and hid him from our enemies (2 Samuel 4:4). My friend gave him his grandfather's lands, and treated him as a part of his family as long as he lived (2 Samuel 9).



My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.



Bomb threats are NOT funny at all; in fact they are quite serious. Unfortunately, many live in countries in which the threat of bombing is very real. When such bombings occur, many lives are either hurt or destroyed in their wake — despite warnings which may have been given. These are tragic events, yet all too frequently they happen.

From these tragedies, however, there are some vital lessons for each and every one of us to learn about another **KILLER** that can potentially destroy ALL of our lives.

Warning!

Consider the following imagined scenario...

A telephone call shattered the daily business routine of a local office. The caller announced that a crazed individual had planted a “time bomb” within the office complex and that all occupants **must** evacuate immediately in order to avoid the impending devastation.

“Oh, it’s just a prank call!” John loudly announced. Ignoring the warning, he calmly returned to his work, while discouraging many others from taking the **ALERT** seriously.

Sam and Jim, who worked together, both *said* they “**BELIEVED**” the caller had spoken the truth. Sam quickly began going through each office on every floor in an effort to locate and take with him **ALL** who would listen to his warning.

Although Jim readily *agreed* with those who were making their way to the exit, he just **sat** there, doing nothing about the alarm. He acknowledged the truthfulness of the warning to each passerby, but he continued his work routine, together with John and others. Some of the workers responded by conducting a **search** for “evidence” of a bomb, while others **hid** themselves

SALVATION

in closets and under desks.



A short time later, a “saved” group emerged with Sam a safe distance away from the building and watched as the entire office complex perished in smoke and flames with the horrendous blast.

Question: Why were some saved and others lost? What made the difference?

Answer: “GENUINE” FAITH!

Those who were saved not only **believed** the truthfulness of the message, but they also **acted** upon the instructions contained in the message.

In other words, they were saved **by grace** (the telephone call) **through faith** (the acceptance of the message) **when they responded** to the

message (by moving out of harm’s way, into a place of safety). They were **SAVED** when their faith **RESPONDED** with the **APPROPRIATE** actions — not just *any* action (hiding in the closet, etc.) but the *right* actions!

Each and every one of us has to deal with a deadly time bomb called **SIN** (Romans 6:23). The **Good News** is that because of Jesus Christ we can be saved from sin and live eternally. The Bible teaches us that we are saved **BY GRACE** (the giving of God’s Son for the payment for our sin) **THROUGH FAITH** (our acceptance of the message) **WHEN WE RESPOND** in the appropriate manner: repenting of our sins (Acts 17:31), confessing Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:9,10) and being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38).

The **WARNING** has been sounded: ***Sin destroys!*** The way of salvation has also been proclaimed!

Will **YOU** heed the Savior’s instructions?



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

You can visit their Web site at: www.creekwoodcc.org



The Exchange Rate

Allan E. Flaxman

In many, if not in most, of our media news reports our “dollar” is measured against other important national currencies. The result is what is referred to as the “Exchange

Rate.” In other words, we are able to determine from the exchange rate how much our dollar is worth in each country or, how much, say, the USA, would give us for our dollar.

SALVATION

Jesus Christ was talking about an extremely important “exchange rate” when He said, “*For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Matthew 16:26).

The world generally measures a successful life on the basis of how much money and items of monetary value a person has accumulated during his lifetime. For example, you could hear it said, “I see Mr. Tom X died yesterday. Now there was a successful man! I believe he started with nothing — right at the very ‘bottom of the ladder.’ And look what he left! Millions upon millions of dollars! One of the wealthiest men this country has ever known! Yes, he was a very successful man indeed!” But was he a **successful** man?

Judged by worldly standards, the answer is “Yes, he was a ‘Success.’” But notice two things: (1) There is no mention at all, in that snippet of conversation recorded above, of this man’s relationship with God. Not a single word! Why? Simply because he had no such relationship! He had spent his whole life accumulating worldly wealth and had entirely neglected his spiritual needs! To say the very least, here was a serious imbalance. Then (2), he had given no thought at all to the spiritual cost involved in

accumulating his earthly wealth.

What will a man give in exchange for his soul? This could be one of the most important questions, in fact **the** most important question any man should raise concerning himself. Yet too many people never give it any consideration!

Thousands of people daily stumble through death’s door into eternity, quite unprepared to face God and judgment (Hebrews 9:27). We Christians speak and sing frequently of the eternal heaven to which we are bound. Yet we seem, too often, to give little thought to the eternal hell to which so many we know and love are heading.

Hell, according to the same voice that first raised that all-important question, will last forever (Matthew 25:46)! When a person has been in hell for, say, ten thousand years, it will be as though he has just begun his endless term of punishment for his crime in having “*trodden underfoot the Son of God...*” (Hebrews 10:29). Our soul is all-important. We should never exchange it for anything. The cost of making such an exchange is immeasurable. It is also frightening beyond words (Hebrews 10:26-31)! †

Allan E. Flaxman preached for many years for the church in Lakemba (a suburb of Sydney) and is now active in the church in Blacktown, Australia.

HOW

Will You Leave This World?

Albert Gardner

It is not a question as to *whether* we will leave this world, for it is certain this world is not our home, and we are just passing through. We have an appointment with death, and some day we will keep that appointment. "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27).

The question we are considering is not the *method* of our departure, such as disease, accident, or violence. We will not have a choice about those things, just as we do not have a choice about dying. "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

What we are considering is the spiritual condition in which we will leave this world. There are four possibilities, and it is certain that each of us will be in one of these conditions. It is imperative that we determine *now* which of these situations will prevail at death, for once

we leave this world we can change nothing, nor can we alter the destiny of our soul. The rich man tried and was told that his place in torment was fixed, eternally (Luke 16:26).

We can die as a baby. If you are reading this, you have already passed this stage. Babies are safe, and if they die in their innocence they will be saved, for they have never been lost. The doctrine of "Original Sin" is not true. (This is the idea that babies are born guilty of Adam's sin.) One cannot inherit sin because of what sin is. It is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Sin is an *act*, something which cannot be inherited. We can suffer the *consequences* of the sin of another, but not the *guilt* of it. A drunk driver might kill innocent people, but they are not guilty.

The guilt of sin cannot be transmitted biologically, because we do not get our spirit from our parents. God "*forms the spirit within us*" (Zechariah 12:1). He is the Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9). Only family likeness comes from parents.

SALVATION

One can die in rebellion to God as an alien sinner. Some are living in sin though they have heard the Gospel that has the power to save. They reject it and remain alienated from God, so they die without hope. If one dies in this condition, he is lost forever with no opportunity to change destiny. As one dies so shall he be eternally. *"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still"* (Revelation 22:11). Sinners who die without God have rejected His message, pleading, sacrifice, and plan — they die without the cleansing of the blood of Christ.

One may die as a backslider. The Bible is clear that Christians can fall, and many do. *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:12). When a person falls away, he is in a worse condition than before he was saved. After one has escaped the pollutions of the world and *"...they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning"* (2 Peter 2:20).

One can leave God, but there is a way to return if he chooses to do so. The prodigal son went away, but he came to himself, repented,

confessed his sin, and returned home. Simon, who tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, was told to repent and pray for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 8:22).

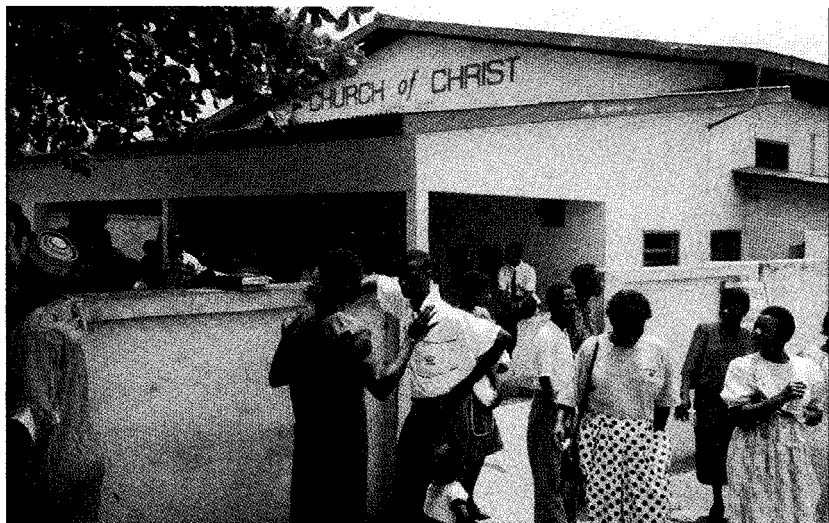
One can die as a faithful Christian. Our real purpose for being on the earth is to find God and to love and serve Him. *"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us"* (Acts 17:27). Unless we have done that, we have not yet fulfilled our reason for being in this world.

It is such a blessing to be a Christian, because it offers peace, joy, happiness, and hope, even in this life. At the end of this life we will die, either with hope or without hope. A faithful Christian will be able to hear the Lord say to him, *"Well done, good and faithful servant..."* (Matthew 25:21). Consider this promise: *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"* (Revelation 21:4). What a blessing! The faithful Christian will be united with all the redeemed of all the ages, and will be in the presence of God forever. †

Albert Gardner is a gospel preacher in Strawberry, Arkansas, USA.

THE CHURCH

Many people say lightly,
"The church is not important!"
But....



What is the church worth?

Dale Jenkins

To Christ it was worth His blood [Acts 20:28]

To God it was worth His Son [John 3:16; Romans 8:3]

To Stephen it was worth his life [Acts 6-7]

To Paul it was worth his heritage [Phiippians 3:8; 2 Corinthians. 11:28]

To Matthew it was worth his job [Luke 5:27]

THE CHURCH

To Philip it was worth his time [Acts 6.8]

To James it was worth his prestige [James 1:1]

To Peter it was worth his attitudes [2 Peter 11]

To John it was worth his concern [3 John 4]

To Jude it was worth his freedom [Jude 1]

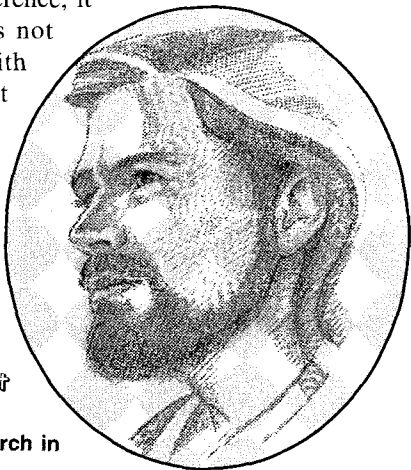
It is no wonder the impact of these on the world, as recorded in Acts 17:6: *"But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.'"*

What does the church mean to you, if you have not yet become a part of it? Please study the New Testament sincerely, to learn the vital role assigned to the church by God.

What does the church mean to you, if you have already obeyed the Gospel and are a member of God's family? What does your behavior tell others about your real evaluation of the church?

Do we, as Christians, realize the church's value, as did those of the first century, or do we malign it and Him by the way we live?

When we allow any of the things of the world to come before the kingdom it's no wonder that the church is not growing now as it did then. With such indifference, it is not surprising that the church is not impacting society as it should. With such lack of commitment it should not shock us that once faithful Christians are abandoning the church for denominations and pleasure. We have been given the **blood-bought, preserved, sanctified, redeemed, precious, bride of, army of, body of, family of, church of, kingdom of God!** What does it mean to you? What is the church worth to you? †



Dale Jenkins works with the Lord's church in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

THE CHURCH



One Church

E. Claude Gardner

The Bible teaches there is one church. Jesus promised to build the church, or kingdom. In Matthew 16:18 He said, "*my church*" (singular), and "*the kingdom*" (singular) in the next verse. He used those terms interchangeably, but **have you thought about this?** — people never speak about Jesus having many *kingdoms*!

The promise Jesus made while on earth was fulfilled after His death and resurrection. This was done

through His apostles on Pentecost

Day in Jerusalem. For the first time people were "*added*" by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47). Those who were added to the church (singular) had been immersed in water as penitent believers in Christ as their Savior (Acts 2:36-38). When they obeyed the Gospel commands they were saved from sin, and at the same time they entered the church (Acts 2:41). God did the saving and He did the adding.

At that time only one church existed!

In a few decades, some, particularly in the leadership of the church, began to depart from the teachings of Christ and the apostles. Many doctrines and practices were introduced which were foreign to pure Christianity. This resulted in apostasy of much of the "*one church*", which culminated in the Catholic Church — the **second "church"**. The first pope was crowned over it in 606 A.D. For about another thousand years the corruption of the apostate church grew worse and worse. Because of this condition, courageous men sought to reform and correct the outrageous errors. When they failed in their effort, they then began forming their own churches (or denominations) known as Protestants. For the last four or five centuries **many** churches have multiplied, teaching a **variety of conflicting doctrines**.

"Join the church of your choice" sounds good and democratic, but it is not biblical, for in the beginning there was "*one church*," and obviously no choice.

Paul declared that "*there is one body*," and this is the church (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22,23). As one reads the New Testament he realizes he

THE CHURCH

does not see any reference to any denomination, but he reads only of *"the church."*

Paul also taught there is one God, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one hope (Ephesians 4:3-6). "One" means "one." If a person can accept "many churches" he can logically accept "many gods" like the Hindus who have hundreds and even thousands of gods.

In the New Testament we find the record of what the one church believed and taught: the doctrines and commands that were recorded in the Scriptures, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament shows us how the early church worshiped, how God dictated that it was to be governed, how members were to conduct themselves in the likeness of Christ, and how sinners are saved by Christ through obeying the commands of the Gospel.

Since this model is clear in the New Testament, it is the plea of churches of Christ to go back to the Bible and follow the pattern God gave, thereby re-producing, over and over again throughout the world and throughout time, the church we read about in the Bible. This will be Christ's church which He purchased by death and which He will save in heaven (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23). It is not a denomination, because the Lord's church was not a

denomination — a part of a whole — when it began in Jerusalem. It was then, and still is, the entire kingdom of Christ, the one family of God. †

E. Claude Gardner is President-Emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

Such a Love

One soul, longing
For the safety of another
soul,
Much loved,
Cries,
"Oh, God,
If prayers and tears
— if hurt —
Could do it,
He would have been won
So long ago."

With burning tears
Falling in the heart,
The answer comes
Unspoken:
"Yes...
If even death itself
Could do it,
He would have been won
So long ago —
You see... I love him even
more:
I gave My Son."

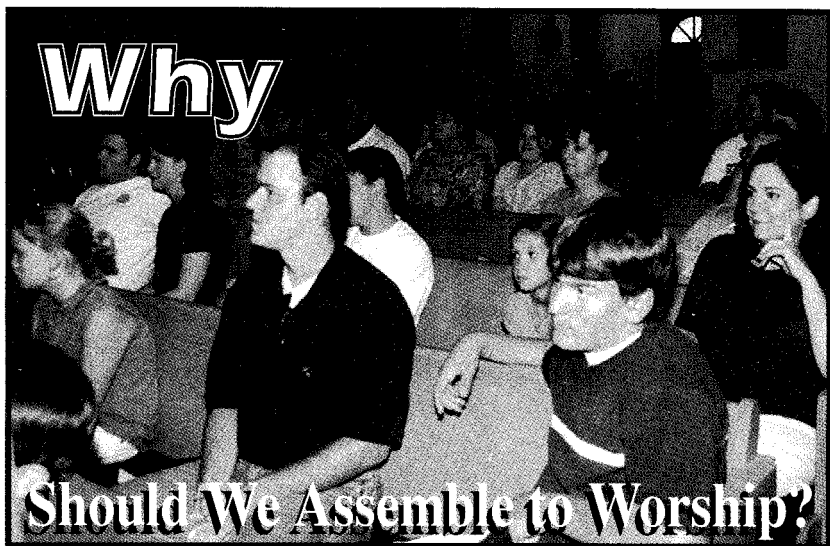
— Betty Burton Choate

WORSHIP

The worship assembly of the church is for the primary purpose of honoring and glorifying God. In this gathering of His people together, Jehovah is recognized and

pose of expressing our love and appreciation to Him.

In essence, each assembly of the church affords an opportunity for us to say to God and to the



Maxie B. Boren

praised as the great Creator of all things. Hearts are bowed before Him in acknowledgment of the fact that He has always been, He is now, and He will always be the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. The songs that we sing, the prayers we offer, the preaching from God's Word, our giving to support the promulgation of the Gospel, and our remembrance of His Son, Jesus, in the observance of the Lord's Supper, are all designed for the pur-

world that we are indeed believers, and we recognize the greatness of our Creator, and we offer Him the praise and adoration of our hearts, our love, and gratitude. The fact that **God** wants His children to worship Him, and that **they** should want to do so, is clearly seen over and again throughout the Bible. (Read such Scriptures as Psalm 89:7; Psalm 95:1-7, Psalm 96:1-9; Psalm 100:1-5; John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:25 as a few examples.)

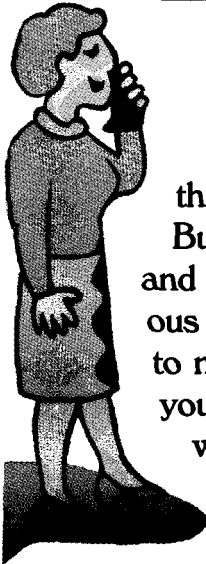
WORSHIP

We should also see an important benefit of Christians gathering together, for the worship of God gives strength and encouragement to one another through being with others of kindred mind and spirit. In reverent worship of God, we share in beautiful fellowship our deepest convictions and sentiments. Warmth of kinship and comradeship flows from heart to heart as voices are blended together in praise of Him from whom all blessings flow. There is mutual edification, exhortation, and encouragement given to one another in the acts (expressions) of worship to the Almighty. There is a profound sense of "belonging" to God's family, and our love for one another as

brothers and sisters in Christ is greatly enhanced by our being together in worship.

May these brief thoughts help us to see why we should want to assemble with our brethren for worship at every opportunity we have. Let us say with David, "*I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'*" (Psalm 122:1). We know that today the church itself is the "*house of the Lord*" (1 Timothy 3:15), so perhaps we should say, "Let the house of the Lord be glad to assemble to worship the one true and living God!" †

Maxie B. Boren is the pulpit preacher for the Brown Trail church in Bedford, Texas, USA.



The Lord Had Already Called

A call came on Sunday morning.

"Tell mother not to go to church services this morning; we are coming."

But the mother went right on to Bible study and worship anyway. The daughter was furious when she arrived and no one was home to meet her. She said, "I called you and told you that I was coming and you went on to worship anyway."

The mother replied, "I'm sorry, dear, but the Lord had already called."

Training Children to Worship

Cecil May, Jr.

Obviously there is a time in infancy when keeping a child contentedly occupied during the worship time is the best a parent can hope for. Bringing a quiet toy, paper and pencil or crayons, which the child can enjoy while the parents participate in worship as much as possible is the wisest course during early childhood. However, too many parents prolong that stage beyond the time it is profitable.

As soon as children can sing nursery rhymes they should be encouraged to sing hymns, by parents pointing in the song book to the words being sung. Very early, children can be taught to bow their heads during shorter prayers, and they can recognize that they are talking to God. Similarly, when scripture is read, they can be taught reverence by having their own Bibles opened to the correct passage. This training is profitable even before the child learns to read.

As soon as children can write, they should be encouraged to make notes on the sermon, writing down scriptures cited and other items of interest. Elementary school children have shown me outlines they made of my preaching that were

better than the outline I was preaching from! We often underestimate their capabilities.

Children old enough to go to school but still spending the whole worship hour playing with toys and coloring books, from before the announcements to after the benediction, with no cognizance at all of what is taking place, are missing out on several blessings, including the experience of worship, opportunity to feel they are being treated as "grown-up", and valuable training concerning the reasons people gather for worship.

Some diversion is necessary for small children, but from an early age parents should begin with a little participation, and gradually encourage more. Children can learn to take part in worship earlier than many think. And the sooner the better, both for them and for their parents!

My wife dealt with our four children as I watched from the pulpit, so this advice is based on what she did and how it turned out — but I saw it work. †

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



Principles of Scriptural Giving

Ancil Jenkins

We are not giving what is **ours**. We do not give to God **a portion of what belongs to us**. Instead, we are giving back to Him part of what is **His**. Our decision is not how much to give, but **how much of God's blessings we can afford to keep** (Romans 14:8; Haggai 2:8).

■ **Giving is to be according to our prosperity.** The more we have, the more we are to give. We are to give as we have been prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2).

■ **What we have is only temporary.** We do not own what we have. God's bounty is only ours to use for a short time. Our possessions are part of our gifts from God. We will give account to Him of the way we have used them (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

■ **Giving is a spiritual matter.** Paul speaks of our giving to God as a service (2 Corinthians 8:4). It is an evidence of our sincerity and is a proof of our love (2 Corinthians 8:8,24).

■ **Our generosity will be**

rewarded. Although reward can never be a proper motive for giving, we have God's promise that He will not forget us and will reward us for our liberality. (Read Proverbs 11:24; Matthew 25:29; Malachi 3:8-10.)

■ **Giving begins in the heart.** The tabernacle was built in the wilderness with gifts that were given from hearts that were stirred to sacrifice for God (Exodus 25:1). Our purpose must begin in our heart, and must be translated to action (2 Corinthians 9:6,7).

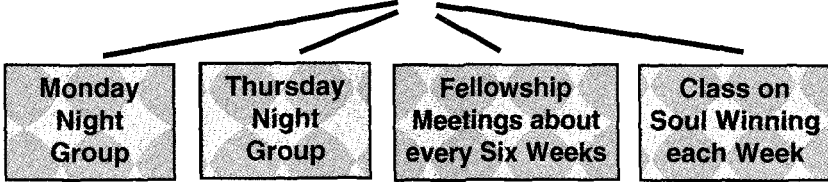
■ **The Lord knows our gifts.** We can hide things from men, yet we cannot hide from God. He knows our hearts. He sees our motives. He observes how much we give.

■ **Our giving is one way to serve Him who is the Source of all things.** Let us understand that giving is serious business. It affects our relationship with God. It affects where we will spend eternity. †

Ancil Jenkins is a writer and preacher in Jamestown, Tennessee, USA.

Program of Evangelism

Soul Winning Director



Some Sources of Prospects:

Unbelieving companions; Bible Correspondence Course graduates; newcomers to town; visitors; religious survey prospects; friends; fellow workers; delinquent members; neighbors; relatives.

Clayton Pepper

Organizing the Soul Winning Program:

- ☛ Appoint a dynamic director who can lead, teach, organize and win souls.
- ☛ Determine how many are ready to conduct home Bible classes and how many will serve as assistants with the view of becoming soul winners. Have as many husband and wife teams as possible.
- ☛ Choose one or more nights per week as work nights with at least ten teams per night working if possible. Have 15 minute devotionals with emphasis on souls. Leave the building as quickly as possible.
- ☛ Continue training classes on soul winning. The teacher will keep abreast of the available information, by various authors, and bring this to class. Ideally, this class will meet on Sunday morning or Wednesday night. Small congregations may wish to have a class one night each week, in a home.

CHURCH GROWTH

- ☼ The leader should phone each team leader each week. Letters of commendation should be written by the leader, preacher and elders. Awards that show appreciation can mean a lot to the workers.
- ☼ Fellowship meetings should be held every six weeks to three months. Church leaders and preachers should be present and should speak words of encouragement to the workers. Projects and programs for visitation should be discussed, with concrete plans mapped out.
- ☼ The necessary filmstrips, projectors, charts, Bible courses and other study materials for prospects should be secured.
- ☼ A volunteer visitation secretary should be appointed. Record keeping information may be found in the books such as **Go Ye Means Go Me, House to House**, etc.
- ☼ All workers should try to go on a campaign for Christ during the summer months.
- ☼ Keep a list of excellent prospects. You should begin with those non-members in attendance and unbelieving companions. When the instant prospects are exhausted, you should take a religious survey of your community. Check with the local authorities about new comers to town and call on them with a welcome packet which may include a small gift along with information about the assemblies of the church.
- ☼ Recruit new people periodically for soul winning. Make a list of those desired to be in the group, and plan a beginner's class for them. Select one of the outstanding soul winners as the teacher. Set a date for the class to begin, then on a Sunday afternoon, all the soul winners and assistants should visit the prospective soul winners and ask them to enroll in the class. Take a copy of the book that you plan to study. Assure them that they will not be asked to teach a home Bible study until they are prepared. To increase your workers, follow this procedure periodically. A sermon on soul winning should be preached on Sunday morning the day recruitment is to begin.
- ☼ Because soul winning is THE work of the church, keep the program before the church at all times; don't allow it to be relegated to the sidelines.
- ☼ Make your program go and glow and grow! †

Clayton Pepper, now deceased, specialized in studies on church growth during his years as a minister in the church.

TOP 10 RULES

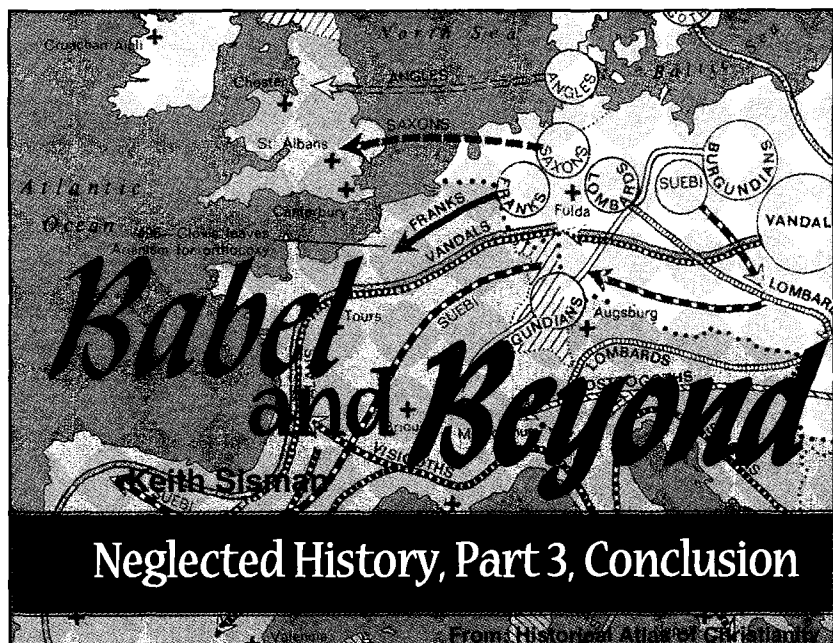
FOR IMPROVING THE CHURCH

Joe R. Barnett

The church, like any living, functioning being or organization, always has room for improvement. The following 10 rules are suggested for improving any congregation.

1. Tell yourself over and over that since you are not perfect, you would not fit into a perfect congregation.
2. Pick out the sincere, dedicated, spiritual members and thank God for them.
3. If you are old, treat the young with the consideration you desired as a young person. If you are young, treat the adults with the respect you will want when you mature.
4. When you are tempted to criticize others, be sure to pray earnestly for them fast. This may not totally change them, but it will do wonders for your attitude.
5. When you see a work being neglected, instead of being critical, offer to help.
6. Never, never blame others for your own failures. Every individual can be fruitful in spite of the bad examples and discouraging attitudes of others, if he is determined to be.
7. Remind yourself every day that the only way you can improve the world or the church is to begin with yourself.
8. Consciously look for the good qualities in every brother and sister in Christ. When you think of a brother or sister, make a quick mental note of the good they possess.
9. Constantly strive to increase your circle of associates in the church. Try to do something good for each.
10. Every church has problems. Ask yourself, "Am I part of the problem or part of the solution?"

†



From 55 BC onwards the Romans had subjugated the peoples of Britain, often retaining their kings. By the time the Gospel of Christ was being spread in the first century, travel was possible across the known world, with no border controls and with superb Roman roads and sea vessels. (Amazingly, transport did not improve until the 1800s.) When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians (Romans 1:8) he talked of their faith being known throughout the whole world, indicating that at this time the Gospel was being spread throughout the Roman Empire, including Britain.

The Latins (Romans) did not class themselves with the Celts or Gauls, although they do trace their ancestry back via a different line of descent to Japheth, whom they also know as their god Jupiter (Jovepater or father Jove).

The historian Crosby says that Claudia Ruffina was a British convert to Christianity. She was wife to Pudens, a Roman Senator. Crosby says this is the Claudia mentioned by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:21.

Early Christianity spread from Asia Minor to Europe and into southern Britain independent of Rome. During the fourth century the Celtic church had evangelised well into Europe and, as the Roman Empire collapsed, much evangelising from the Celtic church took place without hindrance

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from Rome. While the Roman Catholic church was evangelising southern Britain, Celtic missionaries from Wales were evangelising Europe! The Christianity of Britain was of early Palestinian influence and not the later Roman, in origin.

The British king Lucius (king of Llandaff, possibly south England) was converted to Christianity during 167 and turned to the church in Rome instead of the native British church. He built up Camulodunum (It had been burnt down by Boadicea during her revolt), which later became known as Colchester, his capital city. It was through Lucius that Roman influence first started to find its way into Britain.

The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great was believed by some historians to be of British descent. It was Constantine who legalised Christianity in the Roman Empire between 311 and 312, being the first Christian Emperor (died 337). His mother Helena was married to the Roman Senator Constantius who was sent to Britain as a Legate. Constantine's grandfather was king (most likely a duke or earl, being made a puppet king under the Roman Legate) Coel, of Colchester (of nursery rhyme fame 'Old king Cole'). Constantine, whilst brought up by a Christian mother, did not receive baptism until shortly before his death. This is evidence, though weak, that during this period baptism was not being universally used for infants. Constantine was made Emperor at York after his father died, his father having been a Caesar. Most modern historians deny that Constantine was of British descent, but the evidence is very strong for his being English and having a Christian background. After the Apostles, Constantine has possibly had more influence on Christianity than anyone else. Through Constantine and the legalisation of Christianity, paganism entered the church, saint worship, etc.

The Germanic Gauls had many tribes (Lat. Germanus, a name given to them by their Celtic neighbours). The most famous of these tribes was the Angles from Schleswig, northern Germany (Lat. Anglus) and the Saxons, from Saxony, Germany. These tribes invaded England and took power from AD 450 onwards, being known today as the Anglo-Saxons. These people were pagan, most of the British being at that time Christian, in its true or increasingly apostate form. Christianity in Britain was forced into Wales, Cornwall and Scotland.

It is from the name Angle that the name of England is derived. The Angles had many gods, including Tiw, the Germanic god identified with the Roman god Mars. Tiw is still remembered today as the name of the third

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day of the week, Tuesday. The Anglo-Saxons, despite their paganism, could trace their ancestry back to Japheth and during their travels from the middle east to their settlement of Germany they retained their knowledge of the flood but, like the Celts, had forgotten the true God.

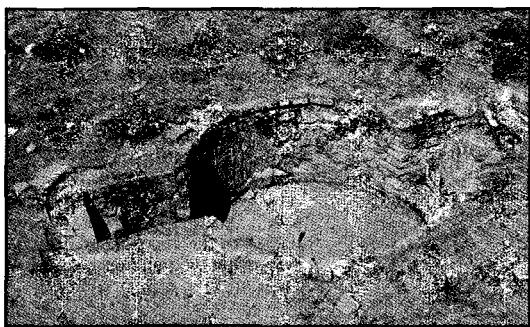
It would seem that during these travels they acquired worship and knowledge of the Assyrian goddess, Ishtar, the same goddess as the Babylonian Astarte, (both pronounced in their original languages as Easter, to whom it was customary to make fresh or hot buns/cakes, see Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:19, two Biblical passages that refer to this goddess). To the Germanic tribes she became known as either the goddess of spring, or the goddess of the East, and called in Germanic *Eostre*, or *Astarun*, from which the Old English word *Aastre* is derived. Today this pagan goddess is still remembered by the world's yearly celebration of Easter and the making of Hot Cross Buns and painted eggs.

Possibly the Christian king Arthur the Great was the last Celtic (pre-English) king to oppose the invading Angles.

About the year 596 — a hundred years after the Anglo-Saxons had conquered Britain — Augustine of Canterbury arrived in England and started to convert the Saxons, baptising in rivers by immersion. There is no mention in Britain of the baptising of children prior to this time. The baptism of Augustine may have been triune immersion as opposed to single immersion of the Celts. It would therefore appear that infant baptism (triune immersion) arrived in England around the year 600.

Baptising in Britain's church buildings did not begin until about the year 627 when King Edwin built a baptistery, for his own baptism.

In the year 689 King Inas, Ine or Iva of the West Saxons, made the law that infants should be baptised (triune immersed) within thirty days of their birth. He also made it an offence to break Sabbath laws and gave the right of sanctuary in church buildings. Further laws or church councils (syn-



An ancient baptistery, dating from early in the fifth century.

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ods) in Britain confirming immersion as the, or a, mode of baptism were passed in 821, 1106, 1172, 1195, 1200, 1217, 1220, 1224, 1240, 1287, 1306, 1422, 1547, 1564 and 1571.

In the early seventh century the Catholic-Augustinian inspired massacre took place at Bangor with the loss of around 1200 members of the Celtic church. Bede says that small groups of independent Christian congregations were still in Wales, despite Catholic efforts to stop them. The last part of England to fall to the Catholics was Cornwall.

There is good evidence that Celtic churches believed in the universal priesthood of believers, believers' immersion, and autonomous congregations with elected elders and deacons. Celtic monks often had their own homes, were married and had secular employment, not considering themselves to be monks but Christians. (The term monk seems to come from later Catholic historians).

There is also evidence that believers' immersion, along with infant immersion, continued up to around 1000 AD in the Church of England, and then only infant immersion continued. This ceased from approximately 1620. From between the 1620s and 1640s onwards the practice of the church of England has been infant sprin-

klung or pouring. In 1645 sprinkling was declared to be preferred and from this date immersion in the Church of England disappeared.

The German Reformer Martin Luther (died 1546) practised the immersion of children and taught that this was the correct mode. He also concluded at one time that believers' baptism was correct, but his Augustinian theology prevented him from teaching and practising this. †

Keith Sisman is a brother in Christ who is doing research on biblical and religious history in the ancient libraries of England.

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Who Can Evangelize?

Bill Dillon

ordinary Christians from using their diverse talents to the glory of God.

The attitude of every Christian must be, "my business is winning souls and I work at my job to pay expenses." Satan's subtle strategy has always been to convince common believers that mission work is so complicated and winning souls so complex that only university-trained experts (preachers) could do it. *Are wars so complex that only generals can fight?*

May God give us grace to see that the fields are still white unto harvest and laborers are indeed few. Let us pray that every Christian be involved in "the Kingdom's sure increase," both on foreign mission fields and in evangelistic efforts at home, so that "*the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (Habakkuk 2:14).

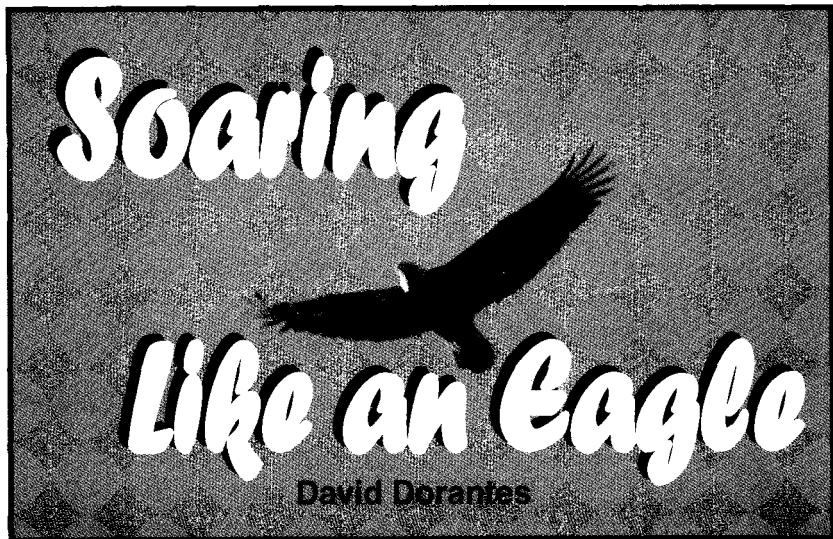
Every Christian, every day, evangelizing in every way is the spirit we are to have if the Gospel is to be shared with the lost world. †

Bill Dillon is a writer and preacher of the Gospel in Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA.

Jesus knew the growth of His church was dependent upon every member of His body being mobilized to teach, preach, and reach the lost. As far as is known, not a single priest or Levite was among the originally selected apostles. Jesus used ordinary disciples as couriers of the message of saving grace.

One of the most astonishing statements uttered by the Lord was, "*...the laborers are few*" (Matthew 9:37). The priests in Jerusalem were so numerous they took turns performing temple ceremonies, yet Jesus said, "*...the laborers are few.*" The entire tribe of Levi was dedicated to religious services, yet Jesus said, "*...the laborers are few.*"

If ever the world is going to be won to Christ, it will be done by the devout disciples in the pews. Much of the church today has become too "professional." We have promoted the "let-the-preacher-do-it-all" syndrome to the point of discouraging



God's Rangers

Of the many branches of the army there is one that seems to have a motto similar to the Christian view of caring for our brethren. The Army Rangers “do not leave a man behind.” We, the Christians, should be even more committed than they, not to leave a soul behind.

Last Sunday I was watching the History Channel as they showed the real story of what happened in Somalia in the 1991 events. The part of the story that gets my heart was how the Army Rangers fought to rescue the helicopter (Black

Hawk) that had been shot down. A mission that went wrong from the beginning could have ended in a total massacre. Those men risked their lives because they believed that the fallen pilots could be saved. In what seemed an eternity, and a trip to Gehena and back, they fought valiantly to rescue their fellow Rangers. It is unbelievable how a few men can overcome and survive the forces of an army when they stick together.

This account inspires me to follow the principle laid down in the Bible about watching out for one

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

another. 1 Peter 1:22 teaches us that we should love one another because we have a common commitment to follow Jesus.

Many of our brothers and sisters have fallen. Many of our spiritual family have been overcome by our enemy without any of us going to their rescue. Also many have visited the assemblies of the church and have never come back. The question I ask myself is, "Did I notice them?"

own strengths, but we need to rely instead on the Master who promised victory. He will bring us home. But in making that journey home we want to carry with us those who have fallen and need our help. With the commitment and desperate struggle of the Army Rangers to save their fellow soldiers from death, we in God's Army must go and search for lost brothers and bring them home with us to safety.

We in God's Army must go and search for lost brothers and bring them home with us to safety.

Did I look for them again, and visit them when they did not come?"

I pray that we will be more careful to watch out for one another. On this journey to heaven where the battle seems so hard, the enemy may overwhelm us unless we stay together and fight together against the army of Satan.

Let us make it our motto not to leave anyone behind. If you know of someone who has fallen, that person needs to be rescued. We can make a commitment to God and to ourselves to be His Rangers, ready to stand together, and to undergo whatever dangers and hardships are necessary to save the lost.

This world sometimes overcomes us because we make the wrong choices or we rely on our

With this deeper awareness, we in the church of Christ can create a new sense of love and care for those who are in need of the Lord. Through our concern we will not only help to save that person but also the ones he or she would influence in life. James tells us of what we accomplish when we bring a person back to Christ:

"My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sin" (James 5:19,20). †

David Dorantes is the Hispanic preacher for the new Spanish-speaking congregation in Springfield, Tennessee, USA.

Just Who Is Leading Whom???

Paul Evans



Did you hear the story about the sweet little old lady who was standing on a busy street corner. She was confused, bewildered by the heavy traffic passing by. Just as she was about to give up and seek another place, or way, to cross, a gentleman approached her. He asked, "Do you mind if I cross the street with you?"

With a huge sigh of relief, she grasped his arm and, together, away they went. As they made their way across the busy street, she became increasingly alarmed. They zigzagged this way and that, horns blared, brakes squealed, and irate motorists screamed at them.

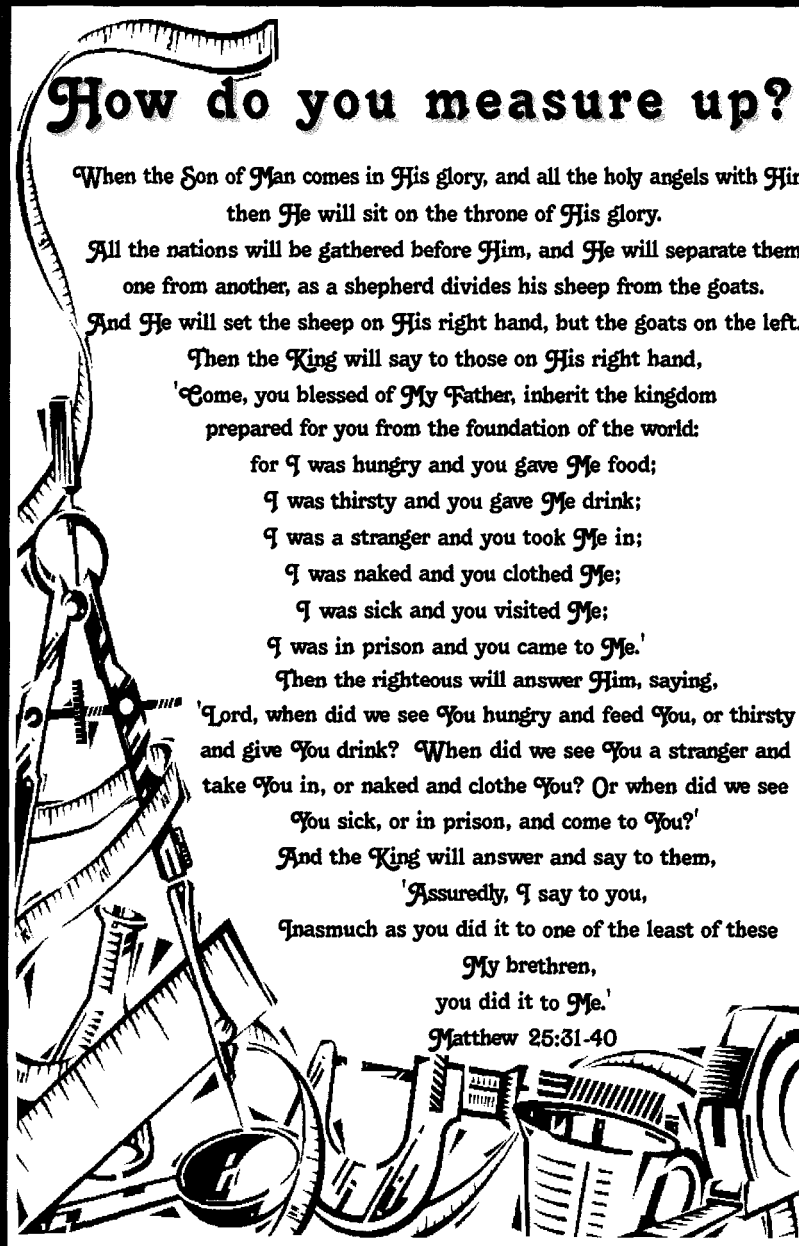
Finally, somehow they made it to the opposite corner. When they got there, she angrily yelled at him, "You almost got us killed!! You led us across the street like a blind man!" "I *am* a blind man," he replied. "Why do you think I asked to cross the street with you?"

When I first read this, I could not help but think of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. With a great air of self-righteousness they led people astray who would follow them, as many blindly follow religious leaders of our day who lead with the same air of self-justification. Said Jesus of such leaders, "*They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*" (Matthew 15:14). I try to never lose sight of this anytime I step into the pulpit, teach a class, or study with anyone. I realize that everyone has someone following in his steps.

Let us be very careful that we be not blind leaders of the blind! †

Paul Evans preaches for the church of Christ in Vidor, Texas, USA.





How do you measure up?

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him
then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them
one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right hand,

'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

for I was hungry and you gave Me food;

I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;

I was a stranger and you took Me in;

I was naked and you clothed Me;

I was sick and you visited Me;

I was in prison and you came to Me.'

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying,

'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty
and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and
take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see
You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

And the King will answer and say to them,

'Assuredly, I say to you,

Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these

My brethren,

you did it to Me.'

Matthew 25:31-40



Growing Immorality

Charles E. Burch

It doesn't take a prophet to look around and see a great nation heading for destruction. Solomon wrote, *"Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34). The principle set forth here has application for every generation. Sin has always been, and will always be, the most destructive element in a nation of people. Notice the conditions of Judah, *"Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush"* (Jeremiah 6:15). Our nation — and much of the world — are in the same condition today!

The present society has devolved to the point that sin is

rampant and people in general have little respect for the word of God. Over and over God has stated the punishment for presumption and rebellion, yet many are openly living in those sins.

Homosexuality is pictured in God's word as a sin worthy of death. *"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death, their blood shall be upon them"* (Leviticus 20:13). But today people argue that it is only an **alternate life** style. God said they were to be put to death! Who do we believe: God or man? Satan does his best to convince humans that we

are the ultimate authority — that there is no God and no absolute of right and wrong, good and evil.

Yet, in the New Testament Paul wrote, *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their own lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet"* (Romans' 1:26,27). Notice **God** gave them up, *to await the final judgment.*

The attitude of the majority toward such sins of immorality is that everyone has the right to live as he pleases and to do what he wishes, as long as he doesn't hurt someone else. The special laws that are being passed for the protection and elevation of this particular type of sinners have placed them in a privileged category. But we must be under no delusion, and we must make no mistake about it: this approval of evil will lead to the destruction of our nation.

Incorporated within the fabric of each type of sinful behavior is the destructive result. Yes, God's judgment on that great day will carry eternal condemnation, but in this life — NOW — those who live by sin will suffer physical and emo-

tional consequences and the majority will eventually die by their sin — whether it be from sexual promiscuity and immorality, or drunkenness, evil and covetous desires, or other violations of God's laws. The consequences cannot be escaped.

Reports were publicized a few years ago which claimed that the homosexual has a brain different from other men, so that he can't help being what he is. But, by inspiration, Paul listed homosexuality as a sin and stated, *"And such were some of you: but ye are sanctified"* (1 Corinthians 6: 9-11). **They changed!** Their problem was not a brain disorder but a lustful desire that led them into this terrible sin.

It is God's will that all people turn from sin and obey the gospel of Christ, so that His blood can wash away their past sins. Every soul is precious in God's sight, but He cannot save anyone in sin. God wants all to be saved. The apostle Peter penned, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). God will forgive any and every sin, but repentance must come first. That means one must cease to commit the sin. †

Charles E. Burch works with the Bellingrath church of Christ in Theodore, Alabama, USA.



Introduction

The scourge of gambling is widespread in our land. And, it is a transgression of God's law, by which each of us shall be judged. Most of the states seek to justify gambling under the guise of helping education, or some such. Even some religious organizations defend gambling, a number of them participating in betting to raise money for their church activities. Although the New Testament does not say in explicit terms, "Thou shalt not gamble," the Word does lay down certain principles from which the necessary implication is that gambling is sinful.

Gambling Defined

Webster defines gambling as "to play a game for money or other stakes, to bet on an uncertain out-

come, to stake something on a contingency, an act having an element of risk." It can take the form of cards, slot machines, Keno, horse and dog racing, cock fighting, the lottery, Bingo, sports contests, et al., and it is sometimes called "gaming". The United States Postal Service defines gambling as having "three factors — a 'consideration' contributed by the participant, the element of chance in selection of winners, and a prize" (*The Montgomery Advertiser*, March 31, 1958, p. 7-A). Some try at times to say the "consideration" is a "donation", but that does not change it from being gambling. And, one can give a "gift" to another, as God gives to us (James 1:17), but one does not take a risk, speculate, or buy chances on a gift.

Gambling Is Sin

One: we are to earn honest gain from honest labor (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8). Gambling does not classify as the work God commands.

Two: whatever we do is to be honorable in the sight of men: *"Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men"* (Romans 12:17). Gambling is not honorable in view of all.

Three: we are commanded to obey the Golden Rule. Does gambling classify as *"whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them"* (Matthew 7:12)? Mutual agreement that one should win does not remove the sin any more than agreeing that if one is caught stealing, deceiving another, or committing adultery, then having a duel takes away the sinful nature of what he has done.

Four: in honest labor, all concerned mutually benefit, both the laborer and the employer. In the lottery the vast majority lose; only an extremely small number win.

Five: the Christian is responsible for being a proper example before others (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 11:1; et al.). *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example"* (1 Timothy 4:12; cf. 4:16). *"Give no occasions of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:32).

The gambler is not a good example but is a stumbling block to others!

Six: not everything is right just because it is legal. *"We must obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). Making gambling legal, as in most of the states and many parts of the world, does not change the fact that it is sin, any more than legalizing prostitution, or homosexuality, or divorce for virtually any cause and remarriage destroys the fact that they are sinful.

Seven: gambling increases the crime level, can deprive a person's family of the necessities of life, can lead to divorce, can cause a person to lose all that he possesses, can be a bad influence on youths, et al.

Conclusion

Gambling does not pay; it costs! Its most severe price is broken homes and lost souls. Satan has many devices, and he is extremely busy trying to undermine the morals, ethics, and righteousness of people throughout the world. As Christians, we must let our voices be heard in this critical fight against the encroachment of sin. Please do everything you can to stand for truth and right! [Thanks to my late, beloved professor Eris B. Benson for many of these thoughts]. †

Curtis Cates is co-editor of "Yokefellow" and serves as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

Immodesty

David Shannon

Lisa Heughan, a beautiful young woman, told a sad story of sexual harassment. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Agents wanted her to strip at a party in return for an entrance visa into the U.S. Finally another agent rescued her from their animal behavior. When he brought her to his office she found that he was no different. His demands were more private, yet more indecent.

To read such things shocks and angers one to the very depths of the soul. Every moral fibre is outraged, and one feels that the integrity of his country has been violated.

But this is not the whole sordid story.

The blame of immorality in the above incident is a two-way street. The offense of the men was described, but what was not told is the fact that Lisa is a model for Playboy magazine. Her nude poses were remembered by the men. In her briefcase she also had copies of the magazine that refreshed their memories. She had committed acts of sin, just as the men intended to do.

MODESTY IS A GOOD WORK!

In Paul's letter to Timothy he stated that dressing modestly is

included in the good deeds which women professing godliness must practice. *"...that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation...which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works (1 Timothy 2:9,10).* The implied opposite must be true of women whose scandalous clothing announces their immodest and immoral life-style, and is proven by Ms. Heughan's story.

IMMODESTY IS A SINFUL WORK!

There are many in America who would cry out that the only evil committed in this incident was the behavior of the men. Wrong! Immodesty is an open sinful ACT. It is not a thought, intention, or dream. Immodesty is a real and deliberate action, which will provoke a particular response. Just as it is true of any other sinful action, immodesty also reaps negative returns.

✱ Immodesty mars reputations.

In 1 Timothy 2:9 Paul took the issue of modesty to the inward person, clearly stating that the dress of the godly woman will reflect what is in her heart. Even many in the world do the same. When a worldly

young man is desiring fornication does he seek a modestly or immodestly dressed young woman? How is the prostitute on the street recognized?

Ladies, if you saw your husband at a distance talking to an attractive woman who was wearing a tight, short dress, would you relax because you believe her to be a good, spiritual woman? Of course not! You would go immediately to your husband to rescue him, and later you would probably question him about who "she" was. You might never have seen her before but her reputation of loose morals

mind. Immodesty, on the other hand, makes a statement of cheapness in its worst sense. The Christian is worth more than the entire world when he is walking with Christ — but, walking immodestly with the world will be read by many as an open statement of having sold one's soul for dirt.

✱ Immodesty promotes the image of a woman as a pleasurable toy or item to be exploited.

Many women enjoy the looks, stares, and even the lewd comments made in their hearing because of their immodest clothing. It builds their confidence, they say. Wrong!

And these young teenage girls, so vulnerable to the world's influence, who go to worship wearing spaghetti-strap dresses, and shorts — where are their Daddies and Mamas? and where are the elders?

was clearly established the moment you saw how she was dressed — and rightly so. She had committed the sinful deed of dressing immodestly, and of potentially provoking an immoral response in the hearts and minds of those who saw her.

✱ Immodesty is an advertisement that one's body has not been purchased by Christ.

Christ purchased the bodies of His followers with the costliest sacrifice ever made — His blood (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). That makes us priceless, and we should adorn ourselves with that awareness in

It is **sin**, feeding the **temptation and pleasure of sin**. Positive looks or comments toward immodest apparel must stem either from gratitude for visual pleasure (lust) or from the hope that the loose morals on display are for real and not just a tease. No Christian can compliment or approve immodest apparel. And no Christian should cheapen his/her body by dressing in such a manner. To do so is to take part in a wicked deed! †

David Shannon works with the church of Christ in Savannah, Tennessee, USA.



The Biblical Cure for Racism

Donny Weimer

Our pluralistic society is a multicultural one. A politically correct philosophy compels us to establish our identity within the race/ethnicity group into which we were born. Because of this, we are coerced to draw lines between our cultural identity and that of others.

"The way to cure racism," we are told, "is through the promulgation of racial and ethnicity diversity within corporations, university, government agencies and other institutions"

(<http://multiculturalism.aynrand.org>). The actual consequence of this thinking, however, is that we are finding our country more divided than united.

The Bible does not teach such diversity as being the axiom for ridding the world of racism. Jesus died for **all people**, equally (John 3:16). He commissioned the apostles to take the Gospel to **every creature** (Matthew 28:18-20). God is not partial when it comes to welcoming people into the body of

saved souls (Acts 10:34). In fact, the New Testament places greater emphasis on the responsibility of the individual than on any particular race or ethnicity (Romans 2:6).

Jesus does not divide God's church into racial or ethnical groups. On the contrary, He actually molds them together into one body (1 Corinthians 12). Each member is granted equal stewardship of the grace entrusted to his or her care (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). Just as every soul is individually held accountable for sinful activity (Romans 3:10,23), so each is equally obligated to comply with the teachings of God's grace (Titus 2:11,12). One preacher accurately remarked, "We all stand on level ground at the foot of the cross." So it is that we are *individuals*, each obligated to the service of the other, regardless of gender or race (cf. Romans 12:5).

The Lord's plan for ridding the world of racism is to give new ethnicity to all races — *a spiritual ethnicity*. This new relationship unites us through a common faith (Titus 1:4). No language barrier stands between children of God who endeavor "*to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3). Jesus abolished the wall of racism when He triumphantly rose from the dead (Ephesians 2:15). Enmity between Christians,

therefore, is never to exist.

Only whole-hearted conversion to Christ is the absolute solution for ridding the world of racism. "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,*" wrote Paul to the Galatian churches. "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:26-28).

What am I saying? that Christians do not look at a person and see someone of a different race or ethnicity? No, Christians look at a person and see an individual. We see a soul. We see someone who needs to be loved, appreciated and respected for the preciousness of his or her worth before God.

God made each of us with a solitary purpose in mind: "*to fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole of man*" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). When we learn to accept the individual, race will no longer matter. "*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*" (Acts 10:34-35). †

Donny Weimar works with the church of Christ in Collinsville, Texas, USA.

Being a Christian in Prison

Dwellie Hill

In this article I hope to explain what it is like to be a Christian in prison. Some people believe that all inmates should remain in prison indefinitely, the nature of the crime being considered. They do not understand that some of the crimes that are committed are unintentional. They tend to put forth little effort in trying to understand the condition and position of the person when the crime was committed.

All men are fallible and sometimes they are punished for their mistakes. At times the chastening of God's hand is at work and those who endure until the end will receive a blessing. Remember, Jesus Christ is the only one to live a perfect life (1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5). Only He was without sin.

You must remember that prison inmates were once just like you — "FREE". We just got caught in our crimes. People of all races, colors, social backgrounds, as well as the educated and the uneducated, are in prison. While we are here we have time to think about our lives. There needs to be a change, and that change is from Satan to Christ.

Being a Christian in prison is not at all easy, mostly depending upon the institution you are in. All institutions have their chaplain, and some of the chaplains will not allow outside ministries to come into the prison. Some prison officials feel as though religious services are a waste of time. We also have our problems with other inmates who do not understand what Christianity

is all about. As long as you say or do things that are not Christ-like, then you are "one of the guys". But if you behave as a Christian should, some say you are playing at Christianity in order to try to get out of prison earlier.

Christians in prison are labeled phonies, hypocrites, weaklings and sissies. Whether we are for real or not, God knows, for He judges the hearts of men. We all will be judged by Jesus Christ one day (Romans 2:11; 14:12). But Christians who are in prison are watched closely by other inmates to see if we say or do anything that is not Christ-like; in other words, Christians are not supposed to make *any* mistakes. There are some inmates who would like to be Christians, but are afraid and ashamed of what others will say about them (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

I am not glad to be in prison, but if it were not for prison I would probably still be living in sin. Prison has made me take a good look at myself and what I have seen did not make me feel proud.

The life that I was living caused nothing but pain and heartache for my family and myself, so I decided to do something about it. I

heard the Word of God (Romans 10:13-17), **I believed** (Mark 16:15-16), **I repented of my sins** (Acts 2:36-47), **I confessed my faith in Christ** (Acts 8:37), **I was baptized for the remission of my sins** (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), and **I am trying to live faithfully** (Romans 12:1,2). Your love and prayers will help me. †

Dwellie Hill writes from a correctional institution in Hardwick, Georgia, USA.

Hand in Hand

He walks with me, unseen, unheard
Along the smooth or rugged way
He speaks to me, the Living Word
"Lo, I am with thee night and day."

Sufficient is His tender grace
For every dark and trying hour
By faith I see His loving face
Beneath me are His arms of power.

Dark shadows shroud the way of life
I shrink from things I cannot know
And in a world of sin and strife
I could not find the way to go.

But in His hand I lay my hand
Though where He leads I cannot tell,
One truth alone I understand
That when He guides me all is well.

— Charles R. Brewer



God Does Not Live In Trees

Jack Gordon

My mulberry tree stood at the top of a hill. She was a very old tree, and when bare limbs were bowed to the breaking point with the ice of freezing rain, Mother would tell me that she could not last through many more winters.

Sometimes, when her branches reached for the ground instead of reaching for the sky because they were loaded with snow, I would run out and shake them off because I was afraid they would break under the load.

That old tree was always slow leafing out in the spring, but then all of a sudden, there she stood, dressed

in fresh new green. During sudden summer storms with violent wind and thunder and lightning, I always wished I could somehow protect her from the wind and rain. But then the clouds would blow away, and she stood there tall and stately, glistening wet in the sun.

High in those wide branches I built a tree house, and there I experienced the fantasies of childhood. After I read "Treasure Island," I was a sailor up in the crow's nest of a great sailing ship. Hidden from the rest of the world, my tree house became the cockpit of a plane, and I was a pilot after I read "Dawn

Patrol” and “Test Pilot”.

On clear summer days, I could see for a good many miles from the top of that tree. Higher than everything around me, I looked out over other trees, and sometimes it seemed like all those branches were reaching up to touch Heaven. And I felt very close to God.

from work. With the smell of diesel from eighteen-wheelers and busses, surrounded by other cars and people, in the midst of the noise and the odors and the buildings and the machines and the tensions that are man's inhumanity to man, we feel that God is very far away, or we forget about God entirely.

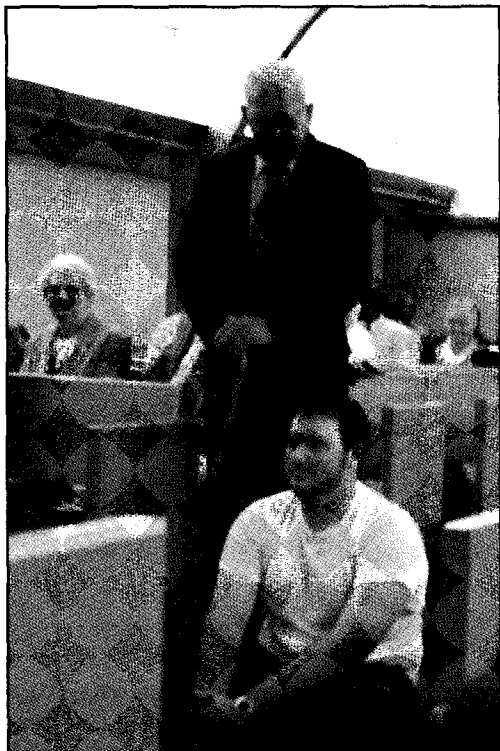
God is not closer to us in one place and then farther away from us when we are in some other place. God, living in us, is determined by what we are in our surroundings and what we are among those who are around us.

But then my fantasy would collapse around me when I was called back to reality — to cut the grass, and work around the house, and run errands, and hoe the garden, and do some other things that I didn't really like. While doing those jobs that were a part of growing up, while doing some of those things I really didn't like (that I now realize were good training), I would sometimes feel persecuted, and it seemed that God was very far away.

As adults, many of us are inspired by all the beauties of nature. And when things are going our way and when we have those good days, we feel very close to God. Then we get stuck in the traffic on the interstate while we are trying to get home

But God does not live in trees. *He lives in us.* It is true that sometimes we feel closer to God when we are surrounded by the beauties of nature. It is also true that it is sometimes harder to feel close to God when we are surrounded by the frustrations of this world. But God is not closer to us in one place and then farther away from us when we are in some other place. God, living in us, is determined by what we are in our surroundings and what we are among those who are around us. God, living in us, is based not on **where** we are, but God, living in us, is based upon **what** we are. †

The late Jack Gordon was a devout servant of God in the church of Christ in Arnold, Missouri, USA.



The Living Bible

Submitted by
George Funk

His name is Bill. He has wild hair, wears a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans, and no shoes. This was literally his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He is brilliant, kind of esoteric, but very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college.

Across the street from the campus is a well-dressed, very conservative church. They want to develop a ministry to the students, but are not sure how to go about it.

One day Bill decides to go there to worship. He walks in with no shoes, jeans, his T-shirt, and wild hair. The service has already begun, and so Bill starts down the aisle looking for a vacant spot. The building is completely packed and he can't find a seat anywhere. People in the pews are looking a bit uncomfortable, but no one says anything. Bill keeps walking, getting closer and closer and closer to the pulpit, and when he finally realizes that there are no seats, he just squats down right on the carpet. Although perfectly acceptable behavior at a college fellowship, trust me, this had never happened in this church before!

By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. About this time, the minister realizes that from way at the back of the

building, a deacon is slowly making his way toward Bill. Now the deacon is in his eighties, has silver-gray hair, and wears a three-piece suit. He is a godly man, very elegant, very dignified, very courtly.

The deacon leans on a cane and, as he starts walking toward this boy, everyone is saying to themselves that you can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and of his background to understand some college kid on the floor?

It takes a long time for the deacon to reach Bill. Utter silence reigns in the auditorium, except for the clicking of the cane. Not even the sound of breathing can be heard. All eyes are focused on the dignified figure making its way down the aisle.

The minister can't begin his sermon until the deacon does what he has to do, so even the air seems to hang heavy, waiting.....

And now the astonished crowd sees this elderly man drop his cane on the floor. With great difficulty, he lowers himself and sits down next to Bill and worships with him so he won't be alone.

Everyone chokes up with emotion. When the minister gains control, he says, "What I'm about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget. Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read." †

George Funk is an evangelist of the Lord's church in South Africa.

Footprints

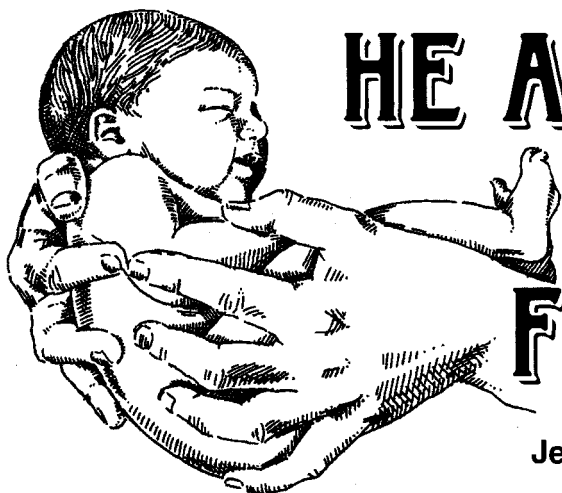
**There are two friends that follow me
Everywhere I go,
They are the footprints that I leave
In mud or sand or snow.**

**They never go before me,
Always behind they stay,
The reason why this is, I guess,
They do not know the way.**

**Little feet, be careful
Where you enter in,
They do not show you where to go
But only where you've been.**

**Yes, you must be careful
As you go along
For other feet will follow you,
And you may lead them wrong.**

— Charles R. Brewer



HE ALSO IS FLESH

Jeril (Polly) Cline

By now much has been written about the shooting of our children. One would think that there is little left to say. Men and women, as well as children of every age, have contributed to my growing pile of questions and answers this sorrow has generated. I have no right to come to you with anything other than words from the Father. His words are eternal and are life-giving. They are trustworthy and comforting. (See 1 Peter 1:23; Romans 15:4).

The very first murder occurred when one brother (still a child by comparison to the longevity of the father) killed another brother, also a child. This was children killing children and within the same family (see Genesis 4). Two chapters later, we read that "every intent of the

thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually" and the Lord was sorry He had made man. He was grieved in His heart (Genesis 6:5,6).

But God shares His most telling thought with us in an earlier verse: "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh*" (Genesis 6:3). You see, when God thinks of us, He thinks of us as **spirit first, then flesh**. But I would dare to say we think of ourselves as flesh first, then spirit, and that is the root of our problem. We cannot ignore the core of our being and expect any other consequence than the one God has said would occur — "*For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life*" (Galatians 6:8).

To “*reap corruption*” is in fact how God describes the whole earth at the time of Noah. “*Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth*” (Genesis 6:11).

In six short verses we have gone from the **mind** of man, “*every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil,*” to the **actions** of man, “*violence.*” In the Hebrew,

It is not incidental that just as prayer, Bible reading, and any reference to God in our schools were **decreasing**, so teen pregnancy, abortion, drug abuse, and violence were **rampantly increasing**. “*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). We cannot take God out of the heart of our children without dire consequences. Satan will fill their thinking with his thinking, his answers, his promises...which will always lead to death.

IT IS NOT INCIDENTAL THAT JUST AS PRAYER, BIBLE READING, AND ANY REFERENCE TO GOD IN OUR SCHOOLS WERE DECREASING, SO TEEN PREGNANCY, ABORTION, DRUG ABUSE, AND VIOLENCE WERE RAMPANTLY INCREASING.

the word used here for “corrupt” is the word *shahat*, which means “destroy.” Man was literally destroying himself before God ever did with the flood. Jesus told a teacher in Israel, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’*” (John 3:6,7). By no choice of our own, we have each experienced the fleshly birth. But to inherit the Kingdom of God each of us must voluntarily submit to a spiritual birth.

Truly the deeds of the flesh are evident (Galatians 5:19-21). Is there hope? Yes! Go back to the time when the whole earth lay in the grip of the Evil One... “*Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord*” (Genesis 6:8). Whereas the earth’s corruption was “*in the sight of God,*” (verse 11), the righteousness of Noah was also “*in the eyes of the Lord.*” Whether we live to the flesh or walk by the Spirit, God takes note.

“*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God*” (Genesis 6:9). This was

not easy. To remain true to God in spite of changes in the world will not be easy in our day and age either. It must begin in our heart and mind. It requires a return to the basics...to love Him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. This is so important as to be called the greatest commandment in all the Law (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 2:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

Though the wickedness of the world was beyond what we can imagine, Noah and his wife and their sons and daughters-in-law all got on that boat. By faith they lived, worked, built, stored, and gathered, in a world gone mad. And Noah's children had to deal with anger, bitterness, envy, wrath, jealousy, and taunting by their peers, the same then as now. But God was able to

save them...and He still saves those who have chosen to be His. *"Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness'"* (2 Timothy 2:19).

We must feed our children's heart, soul, and mind upon the Word of God so that they may come to know Him, become His, and be filled with His Spirit and the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10).

"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). †

Jeril (Polly) Cline is a writer and preacher's wife living in Blue Ridge, Georgia, USA.

The Person Down the Road

In thirty, forty, or fifty years you will meet a person down the road. Whether that someone is kind and gentle or selfish and demanding depends on what you do today. If you live only in terms of what you can get out of life, this person will be crabby, self-centered, and spiteful. But if you open your life to others and live as a giver, this person will be kind, open, and generous.

This somebody whom you will meet down the road some day is you. The person you will be tomorrow depends on the life you live today. Every day, in every way, you are becoming more and more like yourself. Make sure the person you are becoming is someone whom you will enjoy being around.

— Author Unknown



Bill Nicks

Money is something we deal with every day. Since it affects a substantial part of daily life, it is good to ponder what our Lord teaches us in this regard. All of us could use wisdom from above regarding our attitude toward, and use of, money. There are certain principles which serve as guidelines in our effort to learn God's way:

1. These passages show God's love for integrity of character and His abhorrence of dishonesty (Proverbs 10:9; 11:1; Romans 12:17). Many Bible statements show that dishonest gain is a primary temptation (1 Timothy 6:9-11; Proverbs 20:23; 22:28), and that *those who fall prey to it will receive punishment*.

2. We are to honor God with our wealth. *"Honor the Lord with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty..."* (Proverbs 3:9,10). We dishonor God when we trust in wealth rather than God. Proverbs 11:4,28 — *"He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage."* Proverbs 18:11 shows how the rich man without God views his wealth; it is his *"strong city, and like a high wall,"* but the righteous will *"trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths"* (Proverbs 3:5,6). **We dishonor God when we abuse others for the sake of wealth.** *"He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he*

who honors Him has mercy on the needy" (Proverbs 14:31). See also 3:27f.; 21:13; 22:22f. **We also dishonor God when we become so attached to money that we refuse to give back a liberal portion to God for His work.**

3. The way to financial success is to first of all be faithful to God. *"A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished"* (Proverbs 28:20). This does not mean that all of God's people will be wealthy, but they will be richly blessed. They will have the kind of riches God taught to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:18. They, no doubt, had the one kind of physical riches, but they lacked the true spiritual riches. If we genuinely honor God, we will honor Him with our wealth (Proverbs 3:9f). The faithful Christian will be generous in giving to support the work of his local congregation, and he will help the needy (2 Corinthians 9:6-10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Proverbs 11:24f; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27.) Putting God first — setting aside God's portion of one's income, and then allocating the remainder to the other necessities — requires discipline and a certain amount of budgeting. These practices are extremely beneficial in the handling of finances.

If a person works hard and is conservative with his money, God will, in His good providence, see that one has enough of this world's goods to be able to support his family (1 Timothy 5:8). Don't gamble and try to get rich quick at the expense of others (Proverbs 13:11). Don't act foolishly by putting up security for another's loans, thus risking your own (Proverbs 11:15; 18:18).

These simple guidelines show us how God wants us to reach success in regard to our finances. May we ponder them, for they are very important. †

Bill Nicks serves the Lord in Hobe Sound, Florida, USA.

Morning Walk

Amidst the dew of early dawn
I took a morning walk;
And along with me I took a friend
For I felt the need to talk.
Heart and soul unburdened —
I spoke of many things —
Of plans gone wrong, of failure's pain
And how to live with shattered dreams.
My friend just listened quietly
And uttered not a word,
For it was his time to listen
And my time to be heard.
His sympathetic ear brought peace
As we walked this earthly sod,
And I learned to trust in life again
On my morning walk with God.

— Barbara Cagle Ray

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

1 Peter 1:2

*To the pilgrims—
of the Dispersion ... **elect**
according to the **foreknow-
ledge of God the Father** in
sanctification of the Spirit,
for **obedience and sprin-
kling of the blood of**
Jesus Christ **Grace**
to you and **peace** be
multiplied.*

This verse, part of Peter's greeting to scattered Christians suffering persecution, is a **compacted statement of foundational truths** that are referenced again and again in the remainder of the book, and throughout Scripture.

"the **elect**" (Titus 1:1; Romans 8:29; 2 Peter 1:10) are those who, according to their **faith**, conform themselves to the image or life-likeness of His Son. Colossians 3:12 instructs **the elect** to put on the whole armor of God.

"The **foreknow-ledge** — *omni-science* — of God" (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:20). Reference to God's *ability to know* all things even before they happen, but nowhere do the Scriptures imply that He **makes them happen**.

The Godhead — the Father, Jesus Christ, the Spirit — Matthew 3:16, 17; 28:19; 1 John 5:7. Even throughout the remainder of Peter's letter, the three Persons of the Godhead are referred to repeatedly, showing their work in behalf of man's salvation.

"**Sanctification**" — When Christians are born of water (baptism) and the Spirit (John 3:3,5; Romans 6:3,4; 1 Corinthians 12:13), the presence of the Holy Spirit makes the new babe alive to God (Acts 5:32; 2 Corinthians 3:6) — set apart (sanctified) as God's child by the Spirit.

"**Obedience**" and "sprinkling of the blood" — Though God has provided the means of salvation through Christ, we can acquire it for ourselves only through our **obedience**, which involves the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" — literally, our baptism in water into His death, (Romans 6:3,4.)

"**Grace**" and "**Peace**" — The soul who has become a child of God, washed in the blood of Christ, and made new through the working of the Holy Spirit lives under God's grace, with multiplied peace in his heart.

Covenant

Bill E. Smith

A young man sat night after night at the bedside of his dying wife. A cancer, and its futile treatments, had turned this lovely woman into a wretched-looking, bedfast creature without even the ability to control her body functions. She could offer him no joy, no hope, not even any appreciation for his loving vigil. His recreation, his social life, his occupation, his

family, and even his religious activities had all been practically abandoned in his care for this victim. When asked about this loyalty, he answered; "I made a vow to her!"

This young man might have reasoned; "But this is not the beautiful, shapely, vivacious, young women, so full of life, that I made the covenant with! She has changed. She lost the qualities I desired when

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I married her. She does not fulfill my needs any more. I want out!" But he had taken a vow, and he was going to fulfill the terms of that vow... "till death do us part."

So many men and women have sat across the desk from me through the years, explaining why they want out of their marriages, that they have all converged into one character in my mind. They are saying, "I know I took a vow. I know I made a covenant. I know we swore to be faithful till death. But my mate has changed. I don't like him the way he is now. She does not meet my needs any more. I want out. I am not going to honor the covenant any more."

They pledge to pay off a car in 60 monthly payments. They are usually tired of the car before the final payment. It gives them trouble and is expensive to repair. But they pay it off because they signed a covenant (a contract) to do so. They can see *the morality* of that.

Or, they pay on a life-insurance policy for years. When it was about time to collect, what would they do if the insurance company cancelled the policy because they were about to have to pay out on it. Neither the couple nor the government would allow *this* to happen. The couple has a covenant (a policy). They feel the company has a *moral obligation* to pay off, and I agree.

But these same people will make a covenant with each other, and with God, to be faithful until death, and yet feel free to walk away from that contract any time they decide it is not to their benefit. They have more principles when it comes to a car or other monetary matters than when human lives are involved.

Married couples have made a vow to God and to each other, and, "*When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed.*" (Ecclesiastes 5:4). †

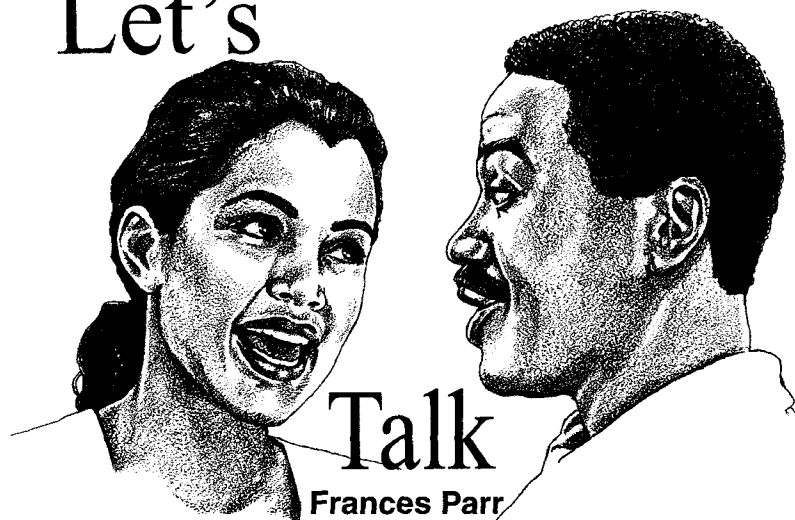
Too many marry for better or worse, but not for good.

When a man marries a woman, they become one — the trouble starts when they try to decide WHICH one.

Husband to wife: "Stick to washing, ironing, cooking, and scrubbing. No wife of mine is going to work."

The bonds of matrimony are a good investment only when the interest is kept up.

Let's



Talk

Frances Parr

A joke is going around about a survey which determined that men speak 15,000 words a day, while women say about twice as many. Women feel the reason for this is that they have to say everything twice, insinuating that men don't listen to them.

Before we jump into defending or blaming one sex or the other, let's take a closer look at the situation.

Lack of communication — this problem exists in every phase of life, in every country of the world. In order to get through a day, whether on the job or at home, it is necessary to communicate with others. Sometimes the art of truly communicating with ones closest family members is the hardest. A few years ago it was called the

"Generation Gap" when parents and children were unable to exchange their deeper thoughts. Many marriages have ended because husbands and wives don't or won't listen to each other.

There are two sides to communicating: listening and speaking. When a person has something important to announce, often he will begin with, "Listen." Just saying the word makes others stop what they are doing and pay attention to the speaker. Genesis 23:8-16 tells of events that happened when Sarah, beloved wife of Abraham, died. Abraham was bargaining with Ephron the Hittite for a piece of land with a cave in which to bury Sarah. Each man used the word "listen" to emphasize points.

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Many of Jesus' parables begin with the word "listen" and end with "*He who has ears, let him hear.*" The implied meaning is to understand what He is saying. At times, we may think we are listening to our spouse or children when really we are just being quiet until they finish talking. Our minds are busy thinking about other things or what we plan to say when they are through.

Jesus spoke to His apostles in Mark 8:17-21 when they were concerned about feeding a multitude. They had observed Him feed five thousand men, not counting women and children. He asked them, "*Do you still not understand?*" They had seen a miracle, yet they did not fully realize that He was God's Son and able to perform another.

Communication is vital to a happy family life, especially if each member goes a different direction every day. As children grow older, it becomes increasingly important to talk, really listen, and understand.

One very beneficial communication concerns the whereabouts of family members. Common courtesy requires ones who have a change in plans to let someone at home know about it. A loved one who is out later than expected can cause a great deal of anxiety unless he or she has mentioned that this might happen.

Sometimes teens feel that parents who want to know where they

are at a given time are being strict or trying to control their lives. Good communication is not an invasion of privacy. Situations may well arise when parents need to quickly contact their child. It is a relief to make a phone call and find the teen exactly where he or she was anticipated to be.

Communication between husbands and wives is of the utmost importance. There is no relationship on earth closer than marriage. When a man and a woman have genuine love for each other, they want to share everything. Each wants to know what the other is thinking, what he is concerned about, how she feels about a certain issue. Listening to and understanding one's mate is an *acquired* art — no one is *born* with it.

On the other hand, family members should learn to speak honestly about their feelings. This becomes easier when others listen, without judging, interrupting, or trying to solve the problem on the spot.

Acquiring the habits of listening, understanding, and sharing will surely enhance your marriage, and that will make living in the midst of a family a joy. With a bit of give and take, days and situations can be worked out to the fullest advantage for all. †

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



What do you do when your religion leaves you?

Samuel A. Matthews

Many people know the exact meaning of this question. In this age of relativism, absolutes fade away. People change; opinions change; whole religions change. This can be very hard on those who are firm in their beliefs.

As popular religions grow more and more toward the idea that truth is relative, even the creeds people once fought for are changing rapidly. Homosexuality is gaining acceptance in religion. So is abortion. In fact, change is the order of the day. People are told to simply "expand your horizons" and not "make a fuss", or not be "judgmental". They are told to keep quiet because "truth" is ever changing and growing. Many people, as a result, become frustrated and feel that they haven't left their religion, but their religion has left them! They find that their solid ground of conviction is gone, and spiritual insecurity has taken its place.

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

What is right, anymore? Where do they take a stand?

If you feel this way, there is hope shining through the fog of doubt and relativism: **God's word!** The Bible has read the same since it was written. No part of it has been changed. For two thousand years it has provided the right answers and the right guidance for every age and for every culture. It continues to be the one unchanging absolute in an ever-changing world.

be frustrating and deeply painful. Sadly, they can result in spiritual death.

If you have found yourself feeling confused and betrayed because you feel your religion has left you, why not come to the services of the church of Christ? What do we believe? The Bible, period. Not the Bible PLUS anything! The Bible doesn't change, man's opinions do. If a religion is based on the opinions of man, it will change. If it is based

For two thousand years the Bible has provided the right answers and the right guidance for every age and for every culture.

Sadly, through these centuries there have always been people who have done things contrary to the Bible and have twisted Scripture to try to make the Bible say things it never said. Their distortions might even have been called "truth" by some and for a period of time, yet for those who have consistently gone back to search the Scriptures, the shining gold of God's word has emerged in triumph. **Truth cannot change.**

But the errors people teach that are *contrary to the Scriptures*, and the errors people teach *in the name of religion* are often devastating. Even for sincere dedicated people, these moral and religious wars can

upon the word of God, it cannot change because "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines*" (Hebrews 13:8-9).

Even in this mixed-up world where good is often called evil, and evil is called good, there are still people who believe in the absolute truth of the Bible and contend for its authority in our lives. Search them out, and become a part of this army which is God's *pillar and ground of truth* (1 Timothy 3:15). Don't give up hope. †

Samuel A. Matthews is a preacher of the gospel living and working in Connecticut, USA.



When Disaster Comes

Hardeman Nichols

I had a professor in college who loved to repeat, "Cheer up! The worst is yet to come!" He was speaking a part of what is now called "Murphey's Law". It says that if anything *can* go wrong, *it will*. The Christian should not accept this pessimistic conclusion.

Dreadful fear hangs over many people like a permanent cloud. They are uneasy at what *may* take place. And when disaster strikes, it is no surprise to them; they have been expecting it a long time. The future to them has always been foreboding. The Lord has warned against this somber view: "*Be not afraid of sudden fear*" (Proverbs 3:25).

We should not live with such a helpless fatalism. "*For God hath*

not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind" (1 Timothy 1:7). The Creator and Sustainer of our very being has promised to be with us in all the occurrences of life. He will not desert us. He has said, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" It is His certain promise. Therefore we may boldly say, "*The Lord is my helper, and therefore I will not fear what man shall do unto me*" (Hebrews 13:5,6).

When disaster strikes, we should look upon it in the light of the real truths which God has taught about it, preparing and forewarning His children concerning the realities of living in a sin-cursed world.

The Bible teaches that even

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

those in God's own Family are not exempt from the common calamities of life. The laws of nature, which God set in motion, are applicable to all men alike. He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35). Jesus, in Matthew 5:45 says that God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust. In like manner, He allows the common disasters to come upon all, without regard to their spiritual status. In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus explained that when people suffer such tragedies as those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, it is not due to personal guilt. A tornado can destroy a faithful Christian's home as readily as anyone else's. A church building can collapse the same way in which an office building can.

But when disaster comes, the Christian has a different outlook. He knows that regardless of what happens for the moment, or in this life, there is an eternity beyond; and in that new heaven and earth, for the faithful everything is going to be alright. Meanwhile, he has God's assurance, "*Behold, I am*

with you always" (Matthew 28:20). It is not necessary for him to know how God will work out the problems and heartaches. It is enough for him to know His promise to make all things work together for good to them that love Him (Romans 8:28). And, where problems may destroy the faithless, for those who live in faith and depend on God's strength, adversity brings spiritual growth. We trust in God "*through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

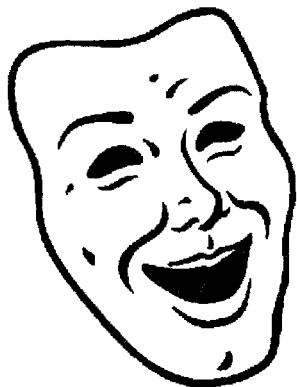
"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:2-5). †

Hardeman Nichols preaches for the Pleasant Grove Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Even When He Is Silent...

A young girl whose name may never be known died in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. But her faith will never be forgotten. On the wall of the cell she occupied until her death, an Allied soldier found these words she had written: **"I believe in the sun even when it is not shining; I believe in love when feeling it not; I believe in God even when he is silent."**

— Copied



"I have this book on backyard problems that you may borrow," offered the kindly neighbor lady.

"Won't you be needing it?"

"No, all of my problems are in the front yard!"



Our Eulene (who was also having the front yard problems) was having a vivid dream about teaching the gospel to someone, but just as she was reaching the final point in her explanation she woke up. Glowing red numbers on the clock told her, "2:38"!



A man who absolutely hated his wife's cat decided to get rid of him one day by driving him 20 blocks

from his home and leaving him at the park....

As he was getting home, the cat was walking up the driveway....

The next day, he decided to drive the cat 40 blocks away, and the same thing happened again. Driving back up his driveway, there was the cat!

He kept taking the cat farther and farther away and the cat always beat him home.

At last, he decided to drive a few miles away, turn right, then left, past the bridge, then right again and another right until he reached what he thought was a safe distance from his home, and he left the cat there....

Hours later, the man called home to his wife: "Jen, is the cat there?"

"Yes," the wife answered. "Why do you ask?"

Frustrated, the man barked: "Put him on the phone. I'm lost and need directions!"



Here's an accident report from the Workers' Compensation Board:

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information in Block #3 of the accident reporting form. I put "Poor Planning" as the

PROVERBS 17:22

cause of my accident. You asked for a fuller explanation and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six-story building. When I completed my work, I found I had some bricks left over which when weighed later were found to weigh 240 lbs. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley which was attached to the side of the building at the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to insure a slow descent of the 240 lbs. of bricks. You will note on the accident reporting form that my weight is 135 lbs.

Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel which was now proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explains the fractured skull, minor abrasions and the broken collarbone, as listed in Section 3 of the accident reporting form.

Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley which I mentioned in Paragraph 2 of this correspondence. Fortunately, by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of the excruciating pain I was now beginning to experience. At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground, and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel weighed approximately 50 lbs. I refer you again to my weight.

As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, broken tooth and severe lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks and, fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, as I lay there on the pile of bricks, in pain, unable to move, and watching the empty barrel six stories above me, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope.

“Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You...”

Jimmy Young

Introduction:

Paul wrote, *“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. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”* (Colossians 3:16).

It is evident that God’s Word is to “dwell” in the hearts (minds) of men. Why is this so important? It will set us on the road to righteous living (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16,17). God’s Word has been of supreme importance throughout the history of mankind. It is God’s Word dwelling in us that keeps us from sin. The Psalmist wrote: *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11).

The apostle Paul had a great love for the church and all mankind. His love would lead him by inspiration to pen Colossians 3:16,17. Brethren, if we really love as we must, the “word of Christ” will “dwell in us richly”. Take the needed time to study the following three points. You will learn the “how” and “why” involved in Colossians 3:16,17.

I. Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You Richly (vs. 16).

- A. The “Word of Christ” is the entirety of the gospel (John 8:32; 17:17).
 1. It is the Word of truth (Proverbs 23:23; Ephesians 1:3).
- B. The word “dwell” means to have a permanent place of abode and it “abides” (lives) in us (1 John 2:14).
- C. The word “richly” means to be in fullness, or abundantly.
 1. James says it is “real” (without hypocrisy) faith (James 1:17).
- D. This Word is to “affectionately” be a part of our life (Psalm 119:11).
 1. This will “guide” our walk in life (Psalm 119:105).

Charts and Outlines

II. Letting the Word Dwell in Us Has a Purpose!

- A. It will bring about spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2).
 - 1. It is the spiritual food which enables us to grow (Matthew 4:4; John 6:63-68).
 - 2. This we must have to build strong spiritual bodies.
- B. It is God's Word dwelling richly in our lives which helps us to overcome temptations (Matthew 4:4,7,10; 1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - 1. God's Word builds us up so that we are able to resist the devil (Acts 20:32).
 - 2. We must be careful not to harden our hearts against the directives of God (Acts 20:32).
 - 3. Our attitude must be a willingness to bend to God's will (Psalm 95:6-11).
- C. God's Word builds us to a point at which we will "go and teach" (Mark 16:15,16).

III. We glorify God when we study for ourselves and when we teach others.

- A. We *must* understand that in *all* things we are to glorify God (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; 1 Peter 4:11).
- B. Our study will lead us to do *all things* that will glorify God (Worship: John 4:24; Life: Galatians 6:3,6,10).
- C. Note: All we *say* and *do* is to be done by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

Conclusion:

- A. Do you *believe* what the Scriptures teach?
- B. If so, you will *do* what they teach.
- C. Are you a Christian? that is, have you obeyed the Gospel? (Hear: John 5:24; Believe: John 8:24; Repent: Luke 13:3; Confess Christ as the Son of God: Matthew 10:32; Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins: Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38).
- D. Are you a *faithful* Christian? (Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Peter 1:5-9).
- E. Are you bearing fruit as a Christian? (John 15:1-8). †

Jimmy Young preaches for the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

The Spirit's Intercession for the Saints

Romans 8:26-39

Earl D. Edwards

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

“Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26,27).

Introduction:

- A. Something invisible but very real, the spirit, leaves the body when physical death takes place.
 - B. But in the decades 1940-90 many in the world tended to deny the existence of the spirit within man.
 - C. However, now there seems to be a significant turn-around with even many Communists accepting the reality of the spirit and the existence of God.
 - D. That makes our study of this lesson (Romans 8:26-39, the Holy Spirit's Intercession) even more exciting.
-
1. The overall theme of Romans: The Gospel as God's saving power (Romans 1:16).
 2. Romans 8 contrasts those persons led by the flesh and those led by the Spirit.
 3. Specific context of our passage is the three-fold testimony to the Christian's great future in heaven (v. 18).
 - a. The creation longs to see Christians liberated from sin (v. 19).
 - b. We Christians “groan”, ourselves, for that deliverance (v. 23).
 - c. The Holy Spirit “intercedes” for us (v. 26).

Charts and Out lines

- E. This lesson will develop this third testimony to the glorious future which awaits us.

I. Our Need for Help in Prayer (v. 26a)

- A. As described in v. 26a: “weakness” — “don’t know how to pray”.
- B. Comments on our need:
 - 1. We do know something about prayer.
 - 2. But our prayers fall short in several ways.
 - a. Hearts are sometimes rebellious (Matthew 15:8,9).
 - b. Sometimes we ask for things which aren’t best for us (2 Corinthians 12:8ff).
 - c. Sometimes we simply “groan”, having no idea what to ask for (cf. Psalm 77:1-4 — this is probably nearer the thought of Romans 8:26ff). Indeed, we do need help in our prayers.

II. The Help the Holy Spirit Provides (v. 26).

“The Spirit also helps our weaknesses.”

- A. Necessary to explicitly identify this “Spirit” for some.
 - 1. A divine Person — not an “it” (John 16:12ff).
 - 2. Third member of Godhead (divine).
 - 3. Not subject to error (cf. John 16:13).
- B. Other passages say He helps us also in *sanctification* (1 Peter 1:1ff), *continuing in holiness* (1 Corinthians 6:;19ff), *empowering us to overcome evil* (Romans 8:13), *giving us assurance of salvation* (Ephesians 1:13,14).
- C. This does not mean the Spirit works alone (without the Word) in the alien sinner’s conversion, as some say. Conversion is *through* the Word (James 1:18; cf. 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Corinthians 4:15).
 - 1. We become Christians by the written Word.
 - 2. Here in Romans 8 Paul is speaking of the help the Christian receives in his prayers *after* conversion.
 - 3. This help is something *in addition to the written Word*, but never *contrary* to it. Scene:
 - a. Christian struggles in prayer on earth.
 - b. Spirit is pleading Christian’s case in heaven.
- D. The work of the Spirit is described as “interceding”.
 - 1. Definition: “begging for God’s mercy” (not limited to Spirit).
 - 2. Interceding is done by:

Charts and Out lines

- a. Men for men (James 5:16).
- b. Christ for men (1 John 2:1).
- c. Holy Spirit for men (John 14:16, and our text).
3. This is Spirit's era of primary service to man (first the Father's, then Christ's, now the Spirit).
4. Spirit interceding does not conflict with Christ being our "mediator" (1 Timothy 2:5). Mediation is much broader.
5. This "interceding" could be rendered (as by Ricciotti) "super-interceding".
6. The Greek word for "helping" (v. 26) is unique: "takes hold of, opposite". I.e. He takes hold of the other end of the burden; leaves me on one end; he helps.
7. Further, the Spirit "intercedes", "with groanings"; takes our "groanings" and presents them to God.
8. God understands (even those "groanings").
9. No evidence that the interceding is miraculous. Having this help, no wonder we are told of the victory.

III. The Victory We Will Attain (vv. 37-39).

- A. The great confrontation which Christ won in His temptations (Matthew 4:1ff; cf. John 12:31; Mark 1:24).
- B. It is this victorious Jesus who guides us through life's storms (temptations).
 1. Satan will win some battles.
 2. But we will win the war with Christ.
- C. To win we must keep striving like Paul (Philippians 3:12). But if we will, there is hope — great hope.
- D. God has "sealed" us with His spirit (a guarantee) (cf. Ephesians 1:13ff). This is the God who cannot lie (cf. Hebrews 6:13ff).
- E. In this God we will be "more than conquerors" (v. 37ff).

Conclusion

- A. We should thank God every day for this "super intercession" of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Through Him Satan is "scaled down to size" so that we can gain victory. †

Earl D. Edwards is the Director of Graduate Studies in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

A Tribute to Joshua

David Deffenbaugh

Obviously, Joshua is a significant biblical character — after all, how many people have a book of the Bible bearing their name? There are a number of things that give tribute to Joshua, and in learning about them we become instructed and encouraged as followers of Jesus Christ to be people of effect and influence (to be “salt” and “light” as He said).

The very fact that Joshua was alive when the people of Israel entered the promised land was a tribute to him! By that time, all of his contemporaries, except Caleb, were dead. Joshua’s singularity wasn’t because he lived to such an old age, but because the unfaithful generation had perished in the wilderness. That God spared Joshua’s (and Caleb’s) life is a testimony of his faithfulness to God.

Joshua’s challenge to the people to serve God is a tribute to him. One of the most famous of all rallying cries was issued by Joshua, “*If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers*

served which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

The fact that Joshua’s influence outlived him is also a tribute to him. Listen to these incredible words, “*Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the Lord which He had done for Israel*” (Joshua 24:31). One of the genuine measures of a man is seen in his influence on others. Joshua made an admirable mark.

Unlike king Jehoram, of whom it is said he died “*with no one’s regret*” (2 Chronicles 31:20), Joshua’s life was so lived that he could not help but be missed. The remembrances of his life of dedication are a constant tribute to this great servant of Jehovah. We would do well to ask what might be remembered of our lives when we have left this world. †

David Deffenbaugh preaches for the South College Church of Christ in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, USA.

The Apostle of Tears

Bill B. Gibson

All Bible students know that Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. The spiritual condition of God's people was a matter of the deepest concern to him. In this he was a type of Jesus. When Jesus asked His apostles whom men thought He was, they replied that some thought He was Jeremiah (Matthew 16:13,14). Seven hundred years before that, Isaiah had described Him saying, "*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows...*" (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41; Matthew 23:37). He wept at the tomb of His friend, Lazarus (John 11:35).

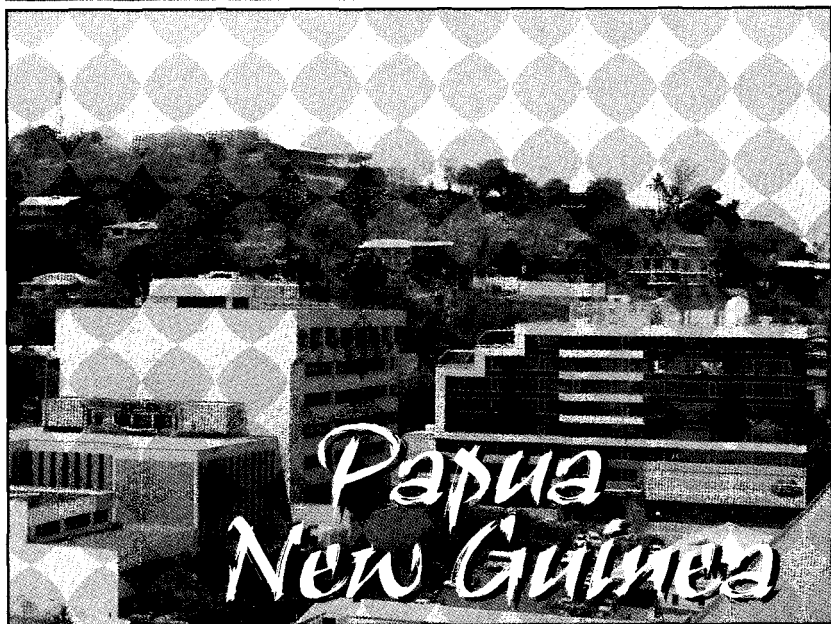
The apostle Paul was like his Master in that he frequently shed tears in his deep concern for the lost. "*He served the Lord...with many tears....*" (Acts 20:19). In talking to the elders of the church in Ephesus, he reminded them that for three years he ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). Because of his abundant love for the saints in Corinth, he wrote to them out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears (2 Corinthians 2:4). The late R. C. Bell wrote, "Paul wrote with

tears in his pen and spoke with tears in his tone. Should not his example prime our hearts and dry eyes?" Writing to his "sweetheart church," Paul said, "*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you ever weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*" (Philippians 3:18-19).

Paul, whose life was Christ (Philippians 1:21), took that life dead seriously! His concern for doing his Master's will was the most important matter to him. His imitation of Jesus made him the apostle of tears. Even as he followed so closely in the steps of Jesus, so must we!

I love the meaningful words of my Bible teacher, R.C. Bell — "Love and tears have a ministry peculiarly their own...the church leaving hearts unexercised and trying to do God's work with only heads and hands, breaks step with Christ and Paul." †

Bill B. Gibson is a retired gospel preacher living in Vinita, Oklahoma, USA.



**(Supplied by Tom Bunt, from the booklet,
"Walking in Yesterday".)**

This fiercely rugged fifteen-hundred-mile long island, poised like a pre-historic bird above Australia, is a land of extremes. The north is divided from the south by the massive mountain range of the Central Highlands whose peaks tower beyond fifteen thousand feet, whose knife-like ridges are divided by deep jungle ravines and gorges carrying racing streams swollen by the constant tropic rains.

The Land

New Guinea, second only to Greenland in size as an island, covers 305,000 square miles. Despite its immensity and the great unsettled area, it is easily accessible. The airplane has opened the "lost world" and the 20th Century can see the condition of stone-age people in less than an hour's flight into the interior.

The western half of the island is governed by the Indonesian Government while the Eastern half is an independent state called Papua

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

New Guinea. Papua New Guinea covers about 155,000 square miles on the mainland and about 23,000 square miles of islands.

Despite the inroads by airplane and regular patrols by the government, there are many areas still not completely explored. From the air you can see the vast and muddy river estuaries, contrasting with the gigantic mountains. In the dense jungle growth, beautiful flowers bloom amidst emerald vegetation, with mosquitoes and leeches sharing the company of gorgeous birds of paradise.

The Climate

The coastal areas are typically hot and humid with a temperature variation between 70 and 90 degrees the year round with the humidity running about the same.

Conditions in the highlands and inland valleys are cool and stimulating with temperatures ranging in the 60 and 70's during the day and falling into the fifties some nights, with even occasional frost. Rainfall varies over the whole of Papua New Guinea from 30 to over 300 inches yearly. At any time the gorges may carry down torrential swollen streams with fog and clouds. Sudden blinding storms sweep constantly and unpredictably through the country.

All of Papua New Guinea lies

completely within the tropics, but variations in temperatures are possible because of the mountains.

The People

The people themselves are the greatest attraction in this land of transition. Papua New Guinea affords an opportunity to view and work with a panorama of people, from the stone-age to the present. A visit to just a few places will provide glimpses of people in every stage. Cannibalism was still practiced as late as the early 60's.

You will see highland dandies adorned with parrot wings, green beetle shells and the gorgeous plumes of the bird of paradise. Many of the people affect bones through the nostrils and colorful armbands of woven orchid fibers are worn on the upper arms. The people made up their own dress-up finery: pearl shell collars, strings of red nuts, strings of bamboo rings, wooden bracelets, bark belts, and pigs', dogs', and other animals' teeth necklaces until the white man came after gold in the 1930's. Today, you will see the same adornments, mixed with glass beads, mirrors and bits of tinsel.

Even the town workers still find the best outlet for expression in ceremonial singing and dancing. A traditional "singsing" may be in preparation for weeks and draws hun-

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

dreds of tribesmen from miles around. There they can be seen painted and decked out in primitive finery, chanting and stamping away for hours, to the beating of age-old jungle rhythms.

In 1975 Papua New Guinea received its independence from Australia. The country is run on a parliament system of government similar to all other Commonwealth nations whose head of state is the Queen of England. †

The History of the Lord's Church in Papua New Guinea

Andy and Catherine Scott

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a Melanesian country of 840 different tribes scattered over hundreds of islands and mountainous terrain covered in dense rain forest, swamps, and broad fertile valleys. Gold, copper, and oil are resources being tapped to help in the development of the country. Agriculture is a very large part of the nation's continuing development especially in the areas of copra, cocoa, coffee, tea and now vanilla. However, 80% of the people are still subsistence farmers living in villages, with the greatest density of population in the middle of the highlands region on the main island.

The physical development of Papua New Guinea has brought together resources and personnel from many countries. In the 1960's government administration and mining concerns brought brethren, Rick Niland and John Wallace into what was then the Australian Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Both of these men later returned to work with other missionaries to spread the gospel.

The first evangelist and missionary family with the Churches of Christ arrived in Lae, Morobe Province in 1971. Joe and Rosa Bell Cannon, veteran missionaries from Japan, shared their dream and plan of spreading the truth of the Gospel of Jesus in Papua New Guinea. Other missionaries came from Australia, U.S.A., Japan, Canada, and Britain. As the church continued to grow, the national brethren took more and more of a lead in the ministry and planting of new churches in their home areas. Today there are over 150 congregations and about 5,000 members. Most of the congregations are located in the Morobe and Chimbu Provinces, but churches can also be found in almost every other province as well. The work continues to expand.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

A 25-year plan of evangelization began in 1975 when Papua New Guinea peacefully gained its independence from Australia. The idea was to establish congregations and Bible training schools in the five major regional capitols and outreach points in many of the provincial population



Andy Scott with local Christians and children.

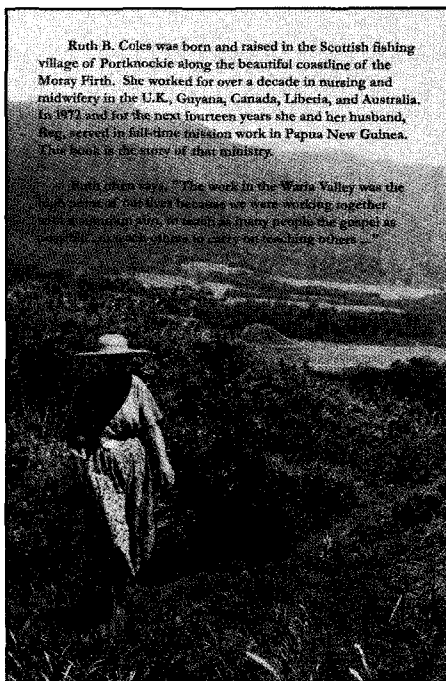
centers, then let the church spread out into the provinces and villages from those centers. Even though not all five centers were developed, in the first ten years the growth rate exploded at a rate of 35%, then slowed down for the next five years to 10% per year. Most of the earlier missionaries have returned to their home countries, but the people of PNG continue to reach out to their own people. Some still hold to the dream of presenting to the Lord a tithe of the souls in PNG, a country of almost 6,000,000 people. There are even Papua New Guinean evangelists living and working in other Pacific countries like Vanuatu, with evangelistic trips by others around the Pacific Rim.

There are still some missionaries from overseas living and working in Papua New Guinea. In Lae there is Andrew Jackson and his family, Velma Foreman, Rose Cobb and Ruth Zimmerman. Velma is missionary nurse. Rose and Ruth have done a lot of work helping churches set up pre-school programs all over the country. Phil and Nansi Lifsey and Jason and Sheryl Moriarty are working in the coastal town of Madang. Phil has started a rehabilitation center to help ex-criminals and drug users find a better way of life. Leslie Williams and Marcus Reese and their families are starting a new work in Alotau, Milan Bay Province on the eastern most point of the main island. Andy and Catherine Scott are locating again in the town of Mt. Hagen, the regional capitol of the highlands.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

The One-Mile Medical Clinic

An important tool in service to the community and evangelistic outreach has been mobile medical clinics held all over Lae. For the last nine years a pediatric nurse from Canada, Velma Foreman, has built up a full-time clinic on the church property at One-Mile in Lae to serve the community and settlements in that area. Speck and Benray help her with the medical work on a full-time basis and also do most of the evangelist outreach teaching of the clinic. Several times a year they pack up supplies and travel out to remote congregations for a week at a time to hold clinics which are often part of evangelistic meetings as well. †



Ruth B. Coles was born and raised in the Scottish fishing village of Portknockie along the beautiful coastline of the Moray Firth. She worked for over a decade in nursing and midwifery in the U.K., Guyana, Canada, Liberia, and Australia. In 1972 and for the next fourteen years she and her husband, Reg, served in full-time mission work in Papua New Guinea. This book is the story of that ministry.

Ruth often says, "The work in the Waria Valley was the high point of our lives because we were working together in a beautiful area, so much so that people the gospel as well as a much closer to each other."

Waria Valley: History of the Work of Reg and Ruth Coles

Reg and Ruth Coles were working in Lae with Joe Cannon when they first heard of the Waria Valley people. At that time Pedora Sumugau was employed as an evangelist with the church in Lae. He was a Waria man from the village of Orouba and had asked Joe to take missionaries to his village who might be interested in working there.

During September 1973 Joe, Reg and Ruth went on patrol to the Waria Valley to meet the people and see this beautiful isolated mountainous area where not one road existed and the people live entirely by subsistence farming. The easiest method of access at that time was to fly from Lae to Garaina

**The back cover of Ruth B. Coles' book,
Journey into Yesterday, an intriguing
account of the Coles' work in Waria Valley.
Available from J.C. Choate Publications,
P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS, 38967**

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airstrip, and then follow bush trails to Orouba, which is 22 days walk away. During this walk the Coles had to cross many swift rivers, traverse hot kunai savannahs and pass through damp shady forests.

The Waria tribe had first been brought into contact with Christianity about thirty-five years previously when native Lutheran preachers came offering them gifts of pork, beads and salt, and persuading them to be "baptized" as Lutherans. Today the Lutheran church dominates the whole area, since every child born there automatically becomes a Lutheran and they are now subjected to great condemnation if they listen to any other teaching.

The majority of the Waria people are a happy, easy-going and peaceful people, for the Lutherans did teach against interclan fighting. However they are very superstitious, very ignorant of the outside world and some are easily provoked by lying rumors.

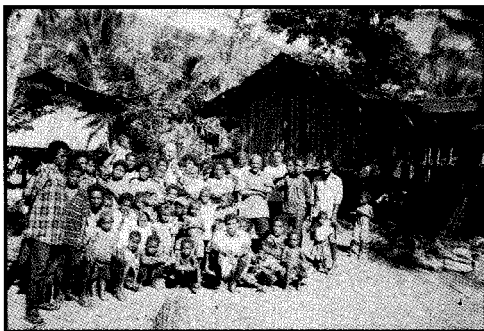
During 1974 the Coles obtained the approval of the elders of their supporting congregation, Pleasant Valley Church of Christ, Little Rock, Arkansas, to work in the Waria Valley. They arrived in Orouba village on October 4, 1974 with Pedora and Garape Sumugau

as their assistants and started a house church with an average attendance of twenty-six during the first month. Ruth, a nurse, and Garape immediately started a medical clinic, as the whole area had been without medical help of any kind for about two years.

Andy and Catherine Scott, the Coles' daughter and her husband, spent two months in Waria in 1976, supervising the start of construction on a house for Reg and Ruth, as well as undertaking much preaching and teaching. It was during this time that a third congregation was started at Qaro-Motete which is halfway between Garaina and Orouba.

Tom and Rens Bunt

In 1975 a congregation was begun by the Coles in Aroba, and shortly thereafter Tom and Rens Bunt of Perth, Australia moved there to help with the work. When a



The congregation at Aroba, in 2000.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .



1

1. Tom Bunt talking with village elders.

2. Rens Bunt giving first aid to villagers.

3. The Sios Church of Christ, begun in 1980 with two members.

4. Baptizing a person in a rough mountain river.



2



3

Film strips and slide presentations were shown in many villages in the district. Through these efforts many souls were and are being won to Christ.



4

house was completed for missionaries in Aroba, they were able to settle in on a full-time basis.

In December 1979 the Bunts came back from leave and moved to Wau, a young congregation with a membership of 41 and many good prospects for future growth.

Daily Bible studies and the use of Bible correspondence courses added regularly to the number.



Sombo Dowara and his family worked with the Bunts in Wau for 4 years, then in Vanatu for 6 years. He has now returned to PNG to do full-time work with the church.

Duane Morgan in Goroka

The work of the Lord's church in Goroka was first begun in mid 1972 when Duane Morgan and his family moved from the work in Lae to begin the church in Goroka. Duane began by walking and meeting people. He met Bayo and later baptized him into Christ. This was the beginning of the Church of Christ in Goroka.

In December of 1972, two other missionary families joined the work in Goroka, the Curtis Harrison family and the John Wallace family. While the Harrisons and Wallaces learned the Pidgin language Duane continued to have Pidgin services in his home with about 40 people attending.

In March all three families had Bible studies going in their houses as well as the regular church service times at Duane's house. John and Curtis began Bible classes in English at the Technical College through some contacts that Duane had made. By the end of March 1973 there were 26 new Christians in the Goroka area. Thirteen of them were converted from the English classes and the others from the village work.

1973 saw the first patrols into the Southern and Western Highlands. John and Curtis took two four-wheel drive vehicles and 11 Christians, converted at the Technical College, on a contact patrol to visit their families and see the potential of establishing churches in these areas. The response was so overwhelming it scared them. They met in denominational church buildings and school houses all that week and talked to hundreds of people who begged for more teaching and for missionaries to come to their villages. One thing was certain: more workers were needed if this nation was to be evangelized.

The Joe Sims family, John and Sara Wallace, the Custis Harrisons, and Andy Scott joined the work force and the church continued to grow. Through campaigns, Bible camps, personal work training programs, and printed materials converts were made and matured in their own service. †

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

Melanesian Bible College

Jab Mesa

In 1971 Joe and Rosa Bell Cannon left Japan to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Papua New Guinea, a country with over 800 tribal languages and cultures. The main communicating languages are English, Pidgin English and Motu. Pidgin English is the most common, and is spoken all over the country.

With the help of the Highland Street Church of Christ of Memphis, TN, brother Cannon started a preaching school in Lae in the mid 70's. The name of the school was later changed from "**Lae Bible School**" to "**School of Life**". It had one purpose: to train preachers and spread the Gospel of Jesus throughout Papua New Guinea.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy (2:2) he says, "*Take the teachings you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses and entrust them to reliable people who will be able to teach others also.*"

In 1988 the **School of Life** changed its name to **Melanesian Bible College (MBC)**. It now had a four year program of studies. The school was directed by Woody Square, a missionary from the US. After the first four



Students and staff of Melanesian Bible College, 2002.

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years and the first graduation, Woody and his family had to return to the States. Andy Scott became the next director from 1992 to 1995 when he moved to Scotland. In 1996 the first national Christian, John Kerenga, became the director until 1997 when he resigned.

The Highland Street Church of Christ has supported the college since its beginning in 1971 until this year. Now the Eastwood Church of Christ in El Paso, TX joins in supporting **Melanesian Bible College**. MBC has trained over 100 men and some women who are active in their local congregations. Ten have left to follow the desires of this world.

One of the highlights of our history is that the college is not only for Papua New Guineans. It has its first international student from Vanuatu and in the future is looking to train preachers and evangelists from Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and neighboring Indonesia, now known as West Irian.

The current staff of Melanesian Bible College is: Jab Mesa, director and teacher, Becky Mesa, secretary and teacher of women, Miamel Golabe, teacher, Michael Tatra, teacher and maintenance.

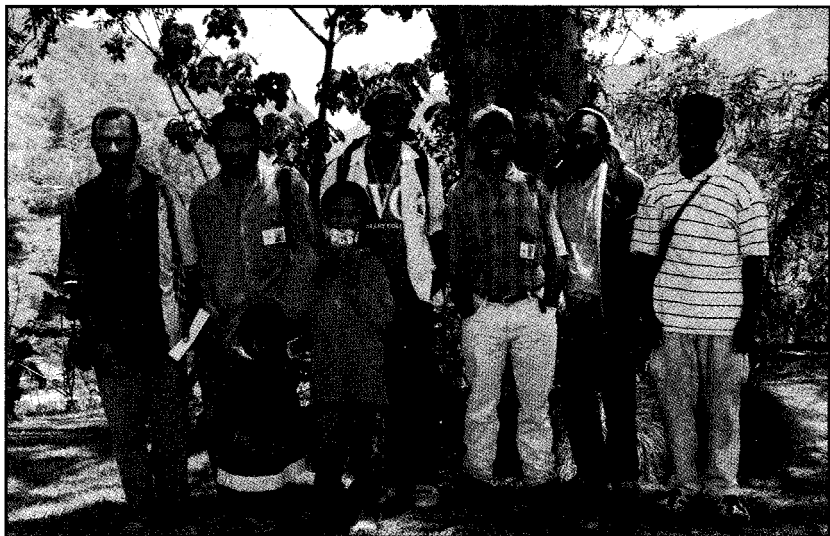
We continue to thank the Lord for our major sponsor, Highland Street Church of Christ, who have stood by us and are continuing to help train many faithful workers. Our thanks also go to Eastwood church of Christ in El Paso and all who have contributed to the work of the church here in Papua New Guinea. †

God Made It Grow **Fred and Sandra Burrows**

Seventeen years ago Christians from Dom-Korokoa, a remote village in the Chimbu province of Papua New Guinea, asked me to use my small truck to move a church building from one mountain top to another. I was about to fall in love with one of God's finest congregations. Years of heavenly fellowship with them gave me more than I gave them.

With the blessings of our sponsoring congregation we selected the church in Korokoa for special classes. From the beginning it was our goal that this congregation should have its own leadership, learn to reach lost people in their area, and to never be tempted to accept foreign funding.

The people of Korokoa, like most Papua New Guineans, are subsistence farmers. Each family grows its own food and with a bit of luck, some coffee beans for cash. Although none of them earns more than the equivalent of \$200.00 per year, the Christians in Korokoa feel richly blessed. Often they



Korokoa brethren who go to neighboring villages to plant churches and teach.

told me that God gives them clean water, plenty rain and rich gardens. They hope that the coffee buyers will give them a good price for their coffee beans. Certainly they knew of those who get “hired” by missionaries, but here was a group of Christians thankful to God for His gifts to them. Often I left the village loaded with vegetables and fruit, their expressions of appreciation for coming to teach them.

Our first teaching program was directed toward the old men of the congregation. Special lessons had to be designed for these men who were not literate. Young men were asked to read the Bible to them regularly. Combining the wisdom of older men with words from God enabled them to reclaim the leadership that is slipping away in so many traditional societies. With time these men gained valuable leadership skill. It was my privilege to see an entire congregation of a denominational group converted. The small building I had first transported was soon too small and the church building had to be enlarged.

Recently the men of Korokoa told me that they had started six congregations in walking distance from Korokoa. “Walking distance” for these men means they walk most all day Saturday, spend the night in another village, preach and then walk home on Monday. They have baptized and are now nourishing about 250 Christians in these congregations. It thrilled my

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heart to hear about one, in particular. Years ago I had met the tribal chief of the Dom people who invited me to teach in his village. When we followed up the invitation, tribal fighting prevented us from going. Now that chief and his village are Christians through the work of the men of Korokoa!

This is more than a wonderful story. It is evidence that the *learned dependence*, so common in third world churches, can be overcome. My wife and I have dedicated our life in missions to break the down-ward spiral too many fall into. We teach biblical principles concerning money in the mission field. Isn't it amazing that Paul brought money from the mission field back to the Christians in Judea (Acts 24:17)? We fail to read of any money from sending churches to the mission fields of Paul and his coworkers. Paul talks of the riches that come to mission churches that invest in their own work (cf. Ephesians 6:68; Colosians 4:17). Is it possible that our generosity needs some adjustments? Thank God for the many who want to spread the gospel in a lost world. Let us work with more wisdom than we have used in the past. With "Training Toward Maturity," a mobile Bible school, we train preachers and church leaders in Papua New Guinea to effectively lead their congregations toward maturity in Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16).

We offer to come to your congregation with a workshop on "missions" that will help you fine tune your foreign mission work. In our world of billions we must work smarter to reach the lost with the marvelous good news Jesus gave to all of us.

Training Toward Maturity

Fred and Sandra Burrows

"...to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13b)

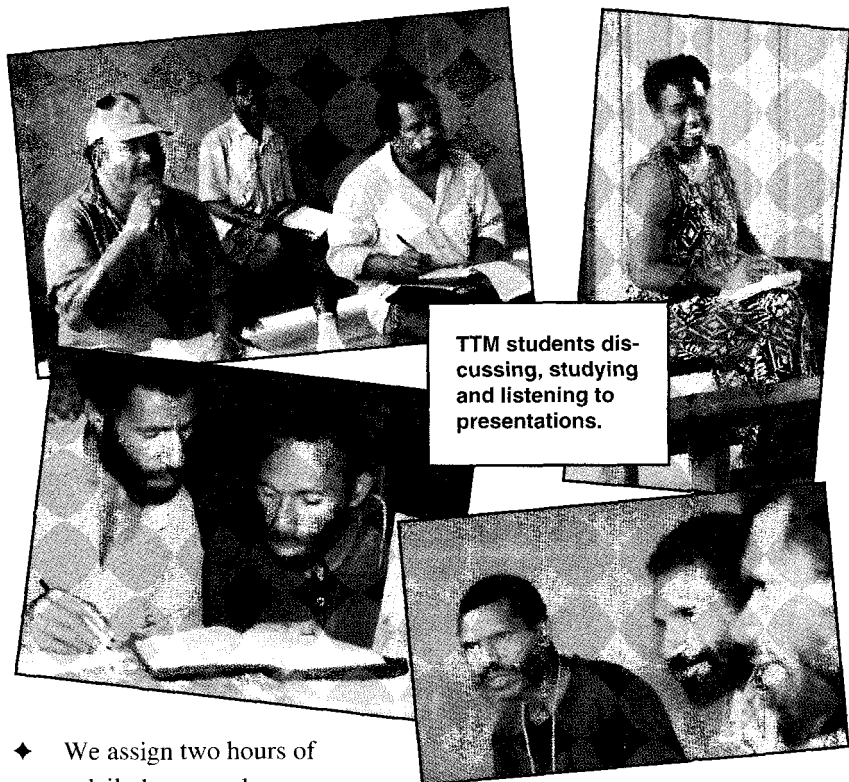
"Training Toward Maturity" (TTM) is a program to educate faithful men beyond opportunities available to them in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Church leaders told us, "We are running dry and need more teaching."

TTM is a structured mobile school designed to fit PNG culture and economy. The three year curriculum includes topical and textual studies for evangelists, church leaders, and women. We use proven adult educational principles known to reach the non-English speaking Melanesian learner.

Four times a year we go to selected centers and teach:

- ◆ Five days per site
- ◆ Four to seven hours per day.

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- ◆ We assign two hours of daily homework.
- ◆ We assign twenty hours of homework between teaching cycles.
- ◆ Students finance their own transportation, room and board.

Eighty-three enrolled in our first session. We teach in Lae, Goroka and Kundiawa. Although we lost some students, attendance has been consistently high. Now we are in our second year of classes and can report a consistent high attendance. More than that, our students demonstrate growth and understanding of the advanced lessons.

From a survey of all churches of Christ in PNG we learned of the needs among Christians. Three concerns emerged from over one hundred survey responses:

- ◆ Biblical training available in PNG did not equip Christians to keep on growing.

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◆ Most preachers and church leaders lacked good personal Bible study skills.

◆ In recent years outreach had almost come to a stop. TTM was specifically designed to meet these three needs.

Our Goal:

We want to see PNG congregations thrive. Preachers and leaders will equip Christians to do the work of service and build up the body of Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:12). By *mature* PNG congregations, we mean:

◆ The internal structure of the congregation includes elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, and active members.

◆ In financial matters the congregation relies on the resources God gives

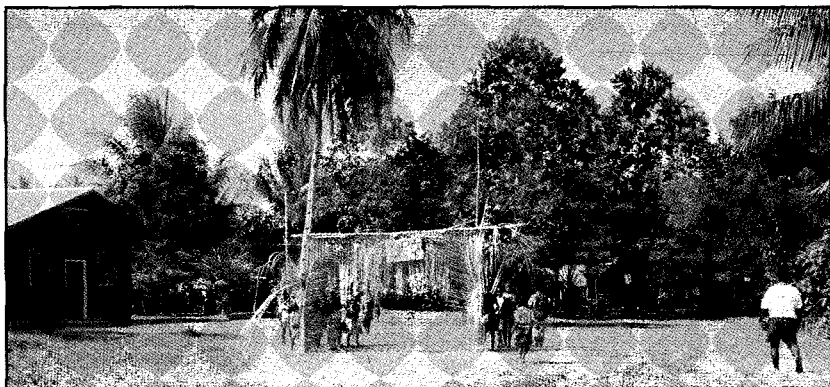
them. Foreign funds too often suffocate congregations in the third world.

◆ The congregations reach out to non-Christians throughout PNG and in other island nations.

We recruit "Teaching Partners" from Churches of Christ to work with us in Papua New Guinea for two to three weeks at a time. Those who have come with us developed wonderful relationships with PNG Christians and gained valuable field experience.

Our mobile TTM program is based on much research and experience in the mission field. We can help sponsoring and supporting congregations break the cycle of learned dependence too often seen among third world congregations. †

**Email: winfredburrows@hotmail.com
www.training-toward-maturity.org**



The church building in Popendetta (Oro Province).

Our sincere thanks to H. Wayne Simpson of Collierville, TN, who supplied numerous pictures for this issue, as well as the front cover.

Sponsors Needed NOW!

We have 25 foreign editions of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Each edition is directed to a country, or to a number of countries, with information pertaining to each one of them. We send thousands of copies to those destinations free of charge and postage paid — but HOW CAN WE DO THAT? The only way is for brethren here in the States to use the magazine in bundle-quantities. Then instead of counting profit from sales or from advertisements (we have none), we put the proceeds into printing editions for places that otherwise could not have them.

For congregations that will order 500 copies or more, at \$1.00 per copy, plus postage, we will print a special edition for your local work, for a gospel meeting, for a campaign effort, for a mission effort, or for your missionary, with an imprint inside the front cover of the information you choose.

We also need volunteers to talk to congregations about using **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**.

For \$25 a month, you can personally receive 35 copies of each issue — 35 copies to share with the precious souls you want to teach! And your sponsorship in this way pays for copies to be sent to foreign fields. Please sign up as a sponsor now!

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

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
Box 11218
Springfield, MO 65808

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 (37 issues) for the reduced price of \$90.00. ***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.***

I want 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. Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way.

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 500 copies (for \$500 plus shipping) special-printed of the next issue, with our (or 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 — 37 (from page 22)

1. "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."
2. Paul and Barnabas.
3. To Jerusalem, to meet with the apostles and elders there.
4. Making more stringent laws than God had made, requiring Christians to keep not only Christ's laws but the old laws of Moses as well.
5. The story of the conversion of the first Gentiles, through his preaching, as recorded in Acts 10.
6. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit, as He had been poured out on the apostles at the beginning of the church in Acts 2.
7. They were testing God, and they were attempting to put a burden on all new converts that the Jews had never been able to keep.
8. To the known fact that God had chosen Peter to preach first to the Gentiles, and that the conversion of Gentiles was fulfillment of Amos' (9:11,12) prophecy that even among Gentiles there were those called by God's name.
9. (1) to abstain from things polluted by idols (2) to flee from sexual immorality (3) to abstain from eating blood.
10. Judas who was also called Barnabas, and Silas, leading men in the church.
11. Yes; yes.
12. Being prophets, inspired by the Holy Spirit, they taught and strengthened the brethren.
13. He stayed in Antioch with Barnabas and Paul.
14. "Let us visit all the churches and see how they do".
15. John Mark.
16. John had turned back on the first trip; Silas; churches in Syria and Cilicia.



Jonathan

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Papua New Guinea



Government: Parliamentary Democracy

Sovereign: Queen Elizabeth II

Governor General: Silas Atopare

Prime Minister: Michael Somara

Information supplied by Wesley Wosse and Tom Bunt

Secular Facts:

Location: In the South Pacific, north of Australia, east of Indonesia, sharing the island of New Guinea with Irian Jaya.

Land Mass: 178,703 square miles; one of the world's largest swamps along the SW coast, some active volcanoes, earthquakes.

Population: 5,000,000; under 15 years, 40%; over 65 years, 3%.

Major Cities: Port Moresby, Lae, Mt. Hagen, Rabaul.

Language: English, Pidgin, 717 dialects.

Literacy: 52%; male, 65%; female, 38%.

Religion: Roman Catholic, 22%; Lutheran, 16%; indigenous beliefs, 34%; other, 8%.

Ethnic Groups: Papuan, Melanesian.

Economy: Agriculture: coffee, coconut, cocoa; Livestock: chickens, pigs, cattle; Labor force, 64% agriculture; Natural resources: gold, copper, silver, natural gas, timber, oil, tuna; Communications: Radios: 68 per 1000; Telephones: 1 per 99 persons; Transportation: 21,600 private cars; Health: Life expectancy, male, 57.2; female, 59; infant mortality: 57 per 1000 live births.

Monetary Unit: Kina.

The Church:

Congregations: More than 150, with perhaps 5,000 Christians in the country.

History: Joe Cannon, missionary to Okinawa, was the first preacher to come with his family to Papua New Guinea. He bought the property for what became the Boundary Road church in Lae in 1971.

Because Papua New Guinea appealed to many who were interested in doing mission work in a remote but responsive area, it has been one of the most attractive fields since its opening. Rick Niland came over from Australia. Duane Morgan moved to Goroka, Gary Hyer to Port Moresby. Reg and Ruth Coles settled in Waria Valley in 1974 to begin the church. Churches were planted in Chimbu and Enga Provinces in 1975. The first supported national preacher was Robert Mingo.

From the years 1975 to 1985, the numbers of Christians grew at the rate of 33% per year, but the growth rate leveled off to 10% after that time.

The church operates Melanesian Bible College in Lae, for the training of evangelists, primarily from the rural areas. A medical clinic and a primary school are also operated in Lae. Numerous village congregations throughout the country also operate small pre-schools.

Front Cover: Men in colorful feathers and costumes for a tribal celebration, by Wayne Simpson.