

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

VOLUME FIFTY-TWO

THE
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REPUBLIC

PAGE 104



About Speech

- Never part without loving words — they might be your last.
- Slander — like coffee — is usually handed to you without grounds.
- Most of us know how to say nothing — few of us know *when*.
- A man's conversation is the mirror of his thoughts.
- A word and a stone, once let go, cannot be recalled.
- Sarcasm is an insult dressed up.
- Give the other fellow a chance to talk. He will appreciate the courtesy, and you will learn something.
- Some people speak from experience, and others — from experience — don't speak.
- "Opened by mistake" applies to more mouths than letters.
- An argument is the shortest distance between two points of view.
- Words are windows to the heart.
- The trouble with a "little white lie" is that it not only grows but it changes colors.
- Swearing is a device for making ignorance heard.
- The tongue must be heavy indeed since so few people can hold it.
- A good way to "save face" is to keep the lower half closed.
- An apology is a good way to have the last word.

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).

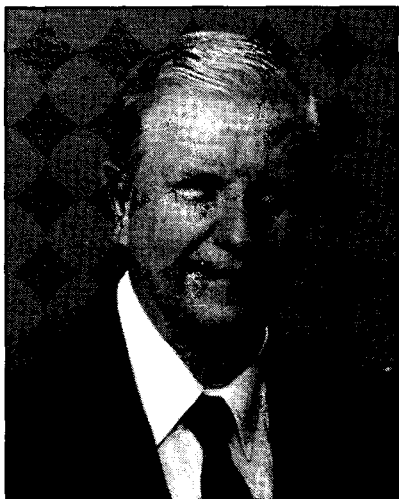
**You have an invitation
to visit with the
CHURCH OF CHRIST
in your area.**

**You might ask,
"Who are these people?"
"What do they teach?"**

A simple answer:

When you turn to the New Testament, Acts, chapter 2, you read of the beginning of the church of Christ. On that day, 3000 people responded to the Gospel, and God added them to the church. That body of believers has been in existence since that day.

It is our plea, today, that believers in Christ go back to the Scriptures, speak where the Bible speaks, add nothing to God's word, and take nothing away, that we be united in that one church in faith, in doctrine, and in practice. Let us hear Him.



CALLING, CALLING, CALLING —

AND STILL CALLING!

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

We have been printing *The Voice of Truth International* for more than 13 years. Through these years we have sent many thousands

of copies of this magazine to countries throughout the world. The more copies we send, the more requests we receive in response. If we had a million copies to share with the rest of the world, we would only be beginning to touch the number that is needed. The need is especially great in Asia and Africa.

Here in the States we have used as excuse for not doing more to evangelize that people are not interested. Our problem is that we do not make a great deal of effort to get them interested. Don't the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses still do personal evangelism, and aren't they growing? It does work — **if** the work is done! But we tell ourselves that people are not interested, and we feel relieved of the responsibility to try to reach them. All of it is Satan's lie. If we will get interested in the souls of people, ourselves, we will find those who are interested in studying. Jesus said that we should go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). If we do not obey His command, how are we any better than those who are living in disobedience because they have never heard?

While we excuse ourselves for failing to take the Gospel to the lost, on the basis that they are not interested, there are millions and millions throughout the world who are calling and calling for help, but we are not listening. How will we explain to the Lord why we didn't hear and answer those souls? If we continue in deafness, one day those calls will cease — and then

will we comfort ourselves again with the excuse that “no one is interested”? How long will God’s people as a whole “rest at ease in Zion”?

Listen to some of those who are “not interested”:

Dear Sir/Madam: Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. My name is Kichi Rupeni. I am writing this letter to thank you and your group that publish this book, *The Voice of Truth International*. I have read this book and it really helped me, and it also changed my life. After reading this book about God, I felt that I should preach, and I will, because God has helped me. So please give me more information about God. Please write to me.

Dear brother Choate: Calvary greetings to you in Christ’s name. I am writing to thank you for the *Voice of Truth* magazines you sent to our congregation. They send their regards to you and to all the others working with you. The materials were a great source of blessings for the church, especially because the church is very young. I am using this medium to appeal to you that you continue to remember us in your mailing list when you are sending others in the future. Remain blessed in Christ’s name. Paul E. Elson

Hi brother in Christ, By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who has called us to one faith I greet you. I read one of your editions of “*The Voice of Truth International*” and I think I have fallen in love with it. I will be very grateful if you could do me the favour by sending me copies. I am very interested in evangelism, since it is the greatest commission that our Lord gave us, that through us people will come to a knowledge of His truth. I love to rescue the perishing and save the erring souls. And with your book I think it will help to broaden my understanding about the Scriptures. Yours faithful, Edward Amihere

My heart breaks when I read all the letters that come to us, asking for books, magazines, and tracts. We send all we can, but the funds that are available to us for printing and shipping the materials are limited.

We have just shipped to brethren in Southern Africa seven pallets of books and magazines — 8000 pounds, thousands of books. Over the years we have sent many thousands of magazines and books, free of charge to the recipients, because they have nothing with which to pay. It is only through funds contributed to our World Literature Fund and *The Voice of Truth International* that this has been possible.

I am thankful to those of you who have sent \$35.00 a month to cover the printing/shipping costs for one box of the magazine, to be sent in

response to an overseas request. (Actually, your contribution each month enables us to send 4 boxes each quarter.) Repeatedly we receive letters saying that those who receive the boxes are sharing them with the congregations for which they preach or with which they worship, and with non-Christians with whom they are studying.



Assembling the pallets of books, each one weighing a total of about 1100 pounds.



What a wonderful sight to see each pallet as it was loaded into the truck, to be taken to Tahoka, Texas, where they will be packed in a crate and shipped to George Funk in South Africa, to be spread far and wide in his "Gospel Chariots" eighteen-wheelers/tents/traveling book displays.

Just think, brethren, as an individual or as a congregation, what you can do to send the Gospel to these people who are starving for it and pleading for it. It is true that here in the US we may have to **look** for those who are interested, or we may have to **cultivate** some interest in spiritual matters, but in Africa and much of Asia the interest is already there in the form of **a ravenous hunger!** Please listen and respond now — not tomorrow. Tomorrow will be too late for many of them. Hunger

and disease make short life-spans; war and genocide are rampant in some areas; Islam is growing by leaps and bounds among those who are searching, religiously. They don't have time to wait for our casual and nonchalant response next month or next year or maybe never. **NOW** is all they have, and — shocking truth: **NOW IS ALL WE HAVE, TOO!**

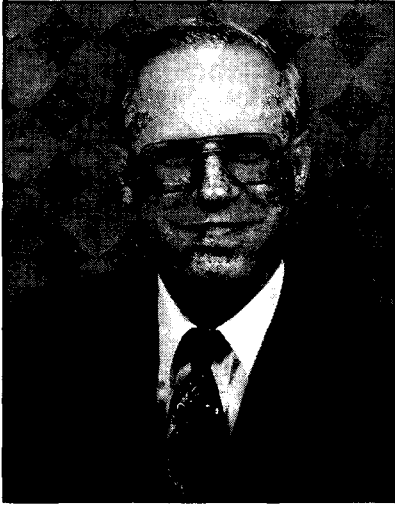
Even here in the States we would like to encourage you as individuals and congregations to order a box of 35 copies to give to local members of the church, to use in personal work among non-Christians, to put in doctors' offices, in medical clinics, hospitals, and other public places. Give them to those who work at banks, post offices, the court house, and other places of business. Take copies along in your purse, ladies, and give them to those you meet while shopping and to others along the way. Let us, as Christians, always be on the look-out for an opportunity to share the Gospel. That is what Jesus meant when He said in Mark 16:15,16 that we are to preach the Gospel *as we are going throughout the world*.

Richmond Kwesi in Accra, Ghana wrote: "Hello brethren in Christ, I am highly elated to contact you again. I thank you very much for the issues you have been sending the people of Ghana, particularly my congregation through me. I have just received the recent issues you have sent and, believe me, they are really wonderful. I believe the Lord will strengthen many souls in His word through The Voice of Truth International.

The evangelism committee in my congregation has planned to distribute the books to souls that will be won during our personal and public evangelisms. Due to the high demand and the high cost of production, we have decided to help contribute a little to you in order for you to continue sending us issues and also to others in Africa. Since we cannot send a cheque, we want you to give us an easy way to send the money. I am so moved by the appeal in one of your issues, as you quoted a letter my mate and brother in the university of Ghana wrote. I look forward to hearing from you as to how and how much you would wish us to contribute to helping spread the Gospel."

I thought of the widow and her two mites when I read Richard's letter. There he is, in a land of poverty and dire need, both physically and spiritually, but he is volunteering that the congregation with which he works give money to help cover the cost of magazines we send to them and to others in Africa. Maybe he is more moved by the appeal than many of our American brethren because he lives with the need every day, and all around him.

Will you help us answer these calls? As an individual, subscribe for a year for \$12. Even that amount will help cover the cost of someone's magazines in Africa. Or as a congregation, order one box of 35 copies for \$25.00 a month or \$300.00 a year, for four issues. Again, this covers the cost of yours and somebody else's who can't pay. Of course, almost any congregation could use several boxes among the members and in evangelizing, **if work is being done**. But if you order magazines, don't let them pile up and collect dust at the meeting house. **They are printed to be used!** †



A TRUE HERO OF THE FAITH

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

The study of history has the potential for some very interesting and enlightening information. To study history is to study the lives of people who lived during that period of time. To study the Bible likewise includes learning about the lives of the people who make up the story of the Bible.

In studying the Bible, it is somewhat intriguing to note that some of

God's greatest followers and servants have taken on a sort of anonymity. In spite of their remarkable contributions to the cause of the Lord, some remain largely unknown to us. We would do well to consider the life and character of one such very noteworthy figure from the pages of the New Testament.

One fact contributing to the lack of recognition for this person is that his name appears only two times in all the Bible — in Philippians 2:25 and again in Philippians 4:18. Epaphroditus was his name, and his brief but extraordinary biography appears in Philippians 2:25-30.

In verse 25 we are introduced very quickly to the caliber of character and commitment of Epaphroditus. Paul describes him as his "*brother*". The great apostle thus refers to Epaphroditus as his equal. In Galatians 3:28 Paul had written, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" In his treatment of Epaphroditus, we see Paul practicing what he preached. In like manner, Paul called him a "*fellow worker*" and a "*fellow soldier*". They were not just companions, but they were workers. As a fellow soldier, Epaphroditus exhibited bravery and dedication, willing to sacrifice himself for the welfare of others.

Word of Epaphroditus' illness reached the folks back home in Philippi, but not the news of his recovery (verse 26). This servant of Christ was less worried about his own critical illness than about the anxiety that the news of

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

his illness was causing to his friends and loved ones back home. He practiced Paul's admonition to "*weep with those who weep*" (Romans 12:15).

Epaphroditus nearly died for Christ and His church (verse 27)! Surely such examples as this ought to cause us today to stop and think. Have we ever really suffered because of our service for and commitment to Christ? What have we ever actually sacrificed for Jesus? This godly man loved the Lord so much that he nearly died trying to serve Him!

In reading both verses 25 and 28, we learn that in spite of Epaphroditus' great desire to return to Philippi, he was willing to stay with Paul, but it was Paul who decided that this dear brother and co-worker must go. Like his Lord, Epaphroditus put others ahead of himself.

Verse 29 is certainly a joy to read. Here Paul is heaping praise upon Epaphroditus, and rightly so. Paul advocates that this man of God and others like him are deserving of the respect and admiration of their fellow Christians.

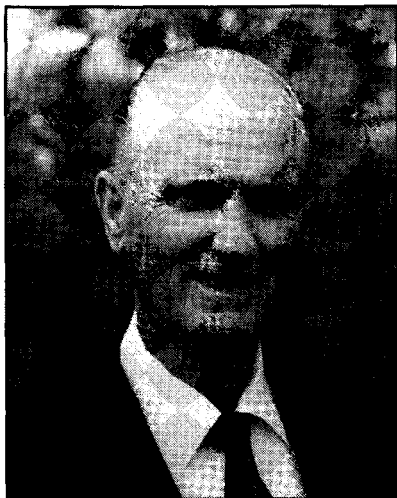
As he closes this very brief tribute to his dear friend and brother, Paul emphasizes once again the fact that Epaphroditus almost died in rendering service to Paul on behalf of the church at Philippi. Paul wanted to assure the brethren back home that Epaphroditus was not a quitter, that he was not a shirker, but was a devoted worker!

Paul was in prison, determined and dedicated, but lonely. Just the presence of a friend or loved one in time of trouble or sickness is a great source of comfort, and Epaphroditus was indeed such a one. He readily associated with and identified himself with Paul, one who was very unpopular at the time, a convict, and one who was no doubt regarded as a traitor by the Jews.

What a beautiful relationship there was between these two wonderful disciples. Just try to imagine what the scene might well have been like when Epaphroditus departed from Paul in prison that day and headed out of Rome back to Philippi. Undoubtedly there were tears of love and sorrow, much the same as Paul shared with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:36-38. Surely these two special friends embraced one another, each one reluctant to let go of the other. Can't you just hear Paul's encouraging words? "Take care of yourself. Don't worry about me. I'll be alright." In all likelihood, expressions of gratitude flowed from the heart and tongue of Paul, as well as a request for Epaphroditus to relay his greetings to various ones at Philippi and his thanks to all of the church there.

Thus we come to the end of this all-too-brief account of life of a true servant of God. I do not know any family that has named one of their children "Epaphroditus", but we would be hard-pressed to find a more worthy model for our children to imitate.





JOHN THIESEN

Editor of the Spanish Edition

It is with extremely mixed feelings that we write to tell you of the death of our brother and co-worker, John Thiesen. We grieve with his family, Ann and their children and grandchildren, in their loss of one so important to the wholeness of the family.

We are sorry for the loss of a fellow-missionary who longed to spend more time in Malawi with the people he loved there. And we are sorry for the loss of the Managing Editor of the Spanish Edition of **The Voice of Truth International**. John has been of invaluable help in recruiting Spanish writers, translating the English version, and proofing the manuscripts to be sent to the printer. Without his help, the Spanish Edition would never have been begun. Now that six issues have been printed, we intend to continue. We are working now to enlist the help of others who can carry on the work John has been doing.

In spite of the grief and sorrow for the losses, in thinking of John, we have to be joyous that he is one of those talked about in Psalm 116:15: "*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.*" That day of release from the pain of this physical body will come for all of us, as it has come for John. May we all be prepared so that we can be at rest with God.

John's Obituary:

John Martin Thiesen was born November 15, 1934 in Clayton, Kansas, the son of Henry and Evelyn (Vance) Thiesen. He died at 3:00 A.M., Monday, October 23rd at St. John's Regional Medical Center,

Springfield, MO, following a long illness.

John, with his wife, Ann, and their children, spent twenty-five years as missionaries in Malawi, Africa, where their son, Mark, continues to serve, along with his family. Following a damaging heart attack, John and Ann returned to the States where he could receive better medical attention. Not willing to sit idly while regaining his strength, John became the managing editor of the Spanish edition of The Voice of Truth International, a quarterly magazine that has been published by the church and widely circulated throughout the world since 1993. John also preached and worked with the Lord's church in Buffalo until shortly before his death.

Survivors include his wife, Ann; three sons, Henry Thiesen and wife, Pam, of Buffalo; Michael Thiesen and wife, Lisa, of Buffalo; and Mark Thiesen and wife, Era, of Malawi, Africa; two daughters, Robin Clay and husband, Dick, of Mt. Vernon, MO and Kim Bower and husband, Wade, of Camdenton, MO, and fifteen grandchildren.

John's influence for truth will continue to be felt through the lives of his family members, through the books he wrote (**Questions People Ask about the Bible and Finding the Answers**), the tracts he authored in two of Malawi's languages, and through the magazines he translated and helped to bring into existence.

Following is John's article planned for this issue of the magazine:

THE GREAT VALUE OF THE CHURCH

Have you ever considered just how valuable the church is in the world? When Jesus came preaching, he told many parables about the church that he was shortly to establish. In His parables, He often referred to the church as "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of Heaven." This was because it was to be an eternal kingdom made up of forgiven people over whom God was to make Christ head and king (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:12-14,18).

In some of these parables Jesus spoke of the great value of this spiritual kingdom of the saved. One of these was the parable of the hidden

treasure. Jesus said, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field"* (Matthew 13:44, KJV). What can we learn here from Jesus' words about the preciousness of the church in God's eyes?

The church is a kingdom that was hidden. Jesus described it as a buried treasure ("hidden in a field"). In previous ages, the church had not yet been revealed to the world. During that time, God was laying the groundwork for its establishment, preparing for the coming of Christ and His death on the cross in order to purchase the church with his blood (Acts 20:28). But now the mystery of the church, the body of Christ, has been revealed through apostles like Paul (Ephesians 3:4-6)

The church is more valuable than anything else in the world. In His parable, Jesus said that the finder *"sold all that he had"* and bought the field. Possessing the treasure was more important to him than all that he already had. This is why Christians invest their time and talents in serving Christ in His church. They know that it is a kingdom that will never pass away, and that serving the Lord in it will result in everlasting rewards.

What makes the church so valuable? It is the fact that it is an *eternal* kingdom established by God Himself. The prophet Daniel spoke of its eternity when he prophesied: *"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"* (Daniel 2:44, KJV). All treasures of this present world are temporary and corruptible and will pass away. But the treasures of the kingdom of God will never fade away. It has an eternal founder and Father, God Himself. God's eternal Son, Christ, is its head (Ephesians 1:22,23). Its members are an eternal family that will give Him glory *"throughout all ages, world without end"* (Ephesians 3:15,21), and who will dwell eternally in an eternal land (1 Peter 1:4; Titus 1:2).

The value of the church is plainly manifested in that it took the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God Himself in order to purchase it (Acts 20:28).

How about you? Have you found this treasure yet? If so, are you putting the kingdom of God first, or is the church secondary in your life? Sell all that you have and buy this treasure!



TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

A Rainbow In Your Sky	Michael L. King	14
A Crown of Thorns	Ardron Hinton	17
Jesus, Meek and Gentle	Rick Cunningham	18

EVIDENCES

Intelligent Design	Owen D. Olbricht	20
It Is Supposed	Bob Cruse	22

THE WORD OF GOD

Safeguards Against False Teaching	Clarence DeLoach	26
Psalms, the Book of Praises	Don Lee	28

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice ...	Betty Burton Choate	32
But Why Be Baptized?	A. L. Franks	35
Miracles Happened	Charles Box	38
10 Reasons Why	Adapted	40

SALVATION

Separated from God!	Loy Mitchell	41
The New Life	Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.	43

THE CHURCH

We Are a Body	Gary C. Hampton	45
All in the Family?	Bill Smith	47

CHURCH GROWTH

The Secret to Waking	John-Mark Wilson	49
Why Are We Here?	Gordon Hogan	53

CHURCH HISTORY

The American Restoration	Dr. Joe D. Gray	55
-------------------------------	-----------------------	----

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Sharing the Gospel	Greg Tidwell	60
Hard to Enter	J. Randal Matheny	61

WORSHIP

Going "To Church"	Stan Mitchell	63
How Much ... ?	Reuben S. Emperado	65

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

A Lesson Learned	Ralph Hunter	70
-------------------------	--------------------	----

God Does, Indeed, Love Us ...	Darla Rosinski	72
Having 20/20 Vision	J. Robert Swain	74
In the World	Royce Frederick	76
Accentuating the Positive	Maxie B. Boren	78
The Prayers of Christians	Don L. Norwood	79
Faith, Love, Obedience	Wayne Barrier	81
Forgiving One Another	Basil Overton	83
Where the Green Bough	Janet Jenkins and Diane Mauk	85

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Marriage Is Honorable in All	Francis David.....	86
What Is a Father?	Lewis G. Hale	88
It's Not Easy to Fool a Child	Dalton Key	89

PROVERBS 17:22

Humor		90
--------------------	--	----

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

God Has Made Sure	Jerry L. Davidson	92
Satan's War	Walekeni Moster L. Nyrienda	94

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Lessons From a River	Betty Tucker	98
Paul's Revealing Faith	Jack W. Carter	100

ETHICS

Saints in Unseemly Places	Bill Dillon.....	101
Tolerance	Cecil May, Jr.	102

FEATURES, POEMS AND FILLERS

About Speech	Inside Front	
Editorial: Calling, Calling Calling —	J.C. Choate	3
Editorial: A True Hero of the Faith ...	Byron Nichols	7
Memorial to John Thiesen		9
Editorial: The Great Value of the Church ...	John Thiesen	10
5-Minute Bible Study		19
Verse Search		24
Quick Commentary		31
How Do You Measure Up?		59
Poem: Please Don't Bury Dreams	Benny Burton Hopper	69
Bible Find		97

FROM THE HEART OF ...

History of the Eglises du Christ in France		104
A French Missionary Speaks ...	Arlin Hendrix	108

A Rainbow In Your Sky

Michael L. King

Shortly following Noah's disembarkation with his family from the ark, after more than a year afloat, they "*built an altar unto the Lord*" and worshipped (Genesis 8:20-22). Unquestionably, their first exposure to the earth following the abatement of the waters was not pleasant. One can imagine the carrion and decay, devastated dwelling places, and repulsive odors. The dismal thought of being alone after having lost family, friends, and acquaintances must have been heartbreaking. One can imagine that a degree of doom, fear, sobriety, and depression must have prevailed. Prospects for a happy, settled life for Noah and his family were not good.

Due to the great faith of Noah and the responsiveness of his family to the preaching of deliverance, God promised to never curse the ground or smite every living thing again as He had just done. They were not to fear when a cloud passed over the earth because of His promise that He would not flood the earth again. God sealed the promise by placing a bow (rainbow) in the cloud as a reminder of His covenant (promise,

agreement) to deliver them safely (Genesis 9:9-17).

The atrocities recorded in the Genesis account can readily be recognized as having extensive meaning beyond that era and intended to impress more than Noah's generation. As Paul recalled the words of David's prophecy of Christ and the fact that "*The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me*", he declared that those "*things written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*" (Romans 15:4). What is the meaning of the occurrence of the deluge in the days of Noah?

The destruction of all living things happened in a physical sense. Jeremiah spoke of a covenant (mutual agreement) that would be made between God and His people, unlike that made with their ancestors who had come out of Egyptian bondage, or that made by God with Noah. This would be a spiritual covenant that would have great and extenuating potential for addressing the sin problem that plagued the earth so devastatingly. In this

agreement, the Lord said, *"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...for I will remember their sin no more"* (Jeremiah 31:33,34).

Jesus has become the "rain-bow" of God to effect the covenant with all who would accept salvation through Him. Ezekiel painted a picture of the heavenly scene where Christ is *"sitting on the right hand of power"* (Mark 14:62). He saw the likeness of the throne with the appearance of sapphire stone with the image of a man above it. There was the bright color of amber, as fire, around the throne, above the firmament. *"As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake"* (Ezekiel 1:28).

This same glorious view of a throne in heaven, with one sitting upon it, is described: *"And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald"* (Revelation 4:2,3). This revelation was a glimpse of things to come.

A bit later in the revelation, John recorded that an angel came

down from heaven and stood with one foot on the earth and the other on the sea (Revelation 10:1,2). Adam Clarke suggests that the angel was either Christ or His representative, clothed with a cloud, a symbol of the Divine majesty. The rainbow upon His head was the token of God's merciful covenant with mankind.

Jesus has become *"the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises"* (Hebrews 8:6). Any and all earlier covenants were made obsolete by the coming of the new law. Because of the inadequacy of previous agreements, particularly the one made with Moses, for example, it is said of Christ that *"...he is the mediator of the new testament (covenant), that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions...might receive the promise of eternal inheritance...So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"* (Hebrews 9:15,28). There is no promise of a pot of gold at the end of this glorious rainbow, but something far better — eternal salvation!

Christ is our "rainbow", reminding us of how much God loved us and gave His Son to activate the "new covenant" of which Jeremiah spoke. In a world filled with clouds

GOD

of stench, and acreage filled with souls emaciated by sin, the rainbow of God looms gloriously above the clouds for His people to take heart and be assured that much hope remains for the redeemed (Luke

1:68). Let us be "*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2). †

Michael L. King preaches for the Lakeside Church of Christ in Orange Park, Florida, USA.

The Rainbow

Revelation 4:3: "*And there was a rainbow about the throne.*"

A rainbow in the heavens!
God's mercy to proclaim;
His voice in rainbow beauty —
"I'll not destroy again."
His promise on parade,
His grace all men to show —
These are the things that we behold,
In the beauty of the bow.
A rainbow around the throne,
An em'rald circled bow,
Seated in the midst is One
Whom men by faith may know.
Herald of proffered mercy,
Assurance of His grace.
Glad hope for rescued sinners —
They'll see His wondrous face.
Claim the promise of the rainbow,
Claim Him who sits upon the throne,
Claim His grace and peace and pardon,
He your every need has known.
Claim the rainbow and the Master,
Then claim His life for you beside.
Claim the fullness of the Savior,
And in Christ be satisfied.

— Ord L. Morrow



To the soldiers of Pilate, it was all a game. They called Him "King", but with mocking tones. They bowed their knee, but their faces bore sneers. They put a reed in His hand for His scepter. They crowned Him with a cruel crown of thorns.

Jesus said nothing. Nothing needed to be said. They had called Him the king, and they were quite correct. They crowned Him with thorns, but it was a crown, just the same. Thorns and gold will dissolve away together one day. The reed served its purpose as a symbol of authority. He created it. Gold scepters are human handicraft.

O, but surely not **that** crown! Not the **thorns!** Blood streaked His face from many wounds. This, too, is no problem. He went there to shed blood. The shame and the pain belong in the picture, too. These are proper penalties for earthly sins. And this King was bearing **my** sins — and **your** sins — that day. †

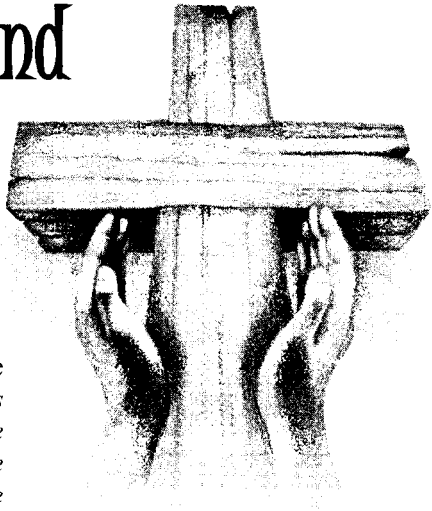
Ardron Hinton is the preacher for the Lord's church in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

A Crown of Thorns

Ardron Hinton

Jesus, Meek and Gentle

Rick Cunningham



Jesus was meek and gentle. He said, *"If any of you is without sin, let him begin stoning her."* He said, *"I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* He said, *"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."* And when He was being crucified He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

Isaiah had prophesied that Jesus would be a gentle man. By inspiration, he wrote, *"A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory"* (Matthew 12:20). Jesus was so gentle and meek that, figuratively, a bruised reed or smoldering wick was safe in His care.

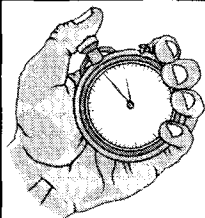
But Jesus also said, *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!"* He said, *"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"* He said to Peter, *"Out of my sight, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of*

God, but the things of men." When some disciples were leaving Jesus because of His *"hard teaching"* (John 6:60), He asked His apostles, *"Do you want to leave, too?"*

Jesus was meek and gentle. But that does not mean He was shallow and superficial or cowardly. Truth sometimes has a hard edge to it. It sometimes rebukes. It even condemns. But truth is necessary to the saving of souls. Even the gentle Jesus spoke the hard truth as it was needed.

May God give us the courage to speak the truth in the spirit of our meek and gentle Lord. †

Rick Cunningham is a gospel preacher working with the 14th & Main Church of Christ in Big Spring, Texas, USA.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY ON KINDNESS

Ephesians 4:32 "And be _____ to one another, _____,
_____ one another, just as _____ in _____ also _____ you."

Romans 12:10 "Be kindly _____ to one another with
_____, in _____ giving _____ to one another."

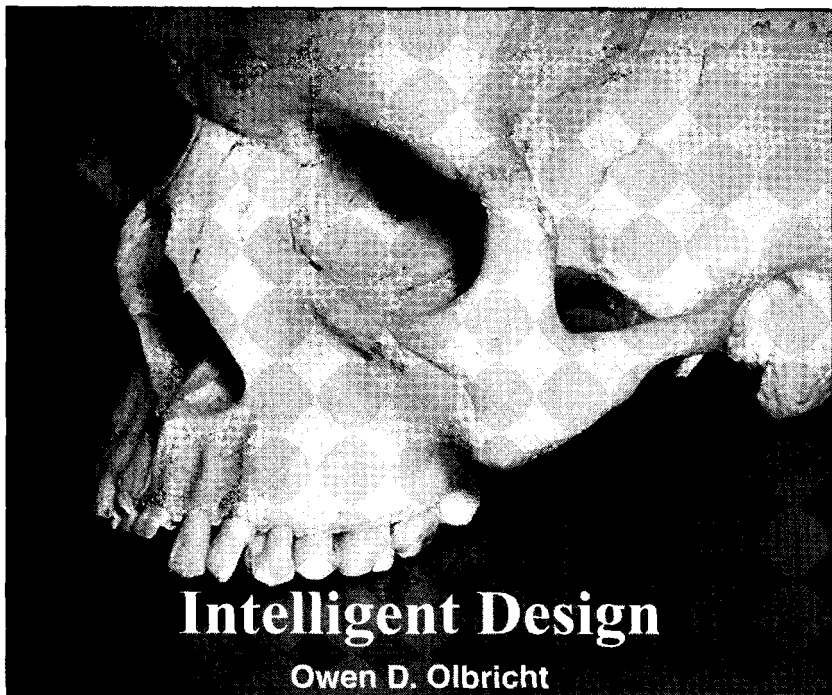
2 Peter 1:5-7 "But also for this very reason, giving all _____,
add to your _____ virture, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-
control, to _____ perserverance, to perserverance godliness,
to godliness _____, and to brotherly kindness _____."

I Corinthians 13:4 "Love _____ and is _____; love does
not _____; love does not _____ itself, is not _____;"

Galatians 5:22, 23 "But the _____ of the _____ is love, joy,
_____, longsuffering, _____, goodness, faithfulness, _____,
self-control, Against such there is no law."

Matthew 25:35, 36 "for I was hungry and you gave Me _____; I
was thirsty and you gave Me _____; I was a _____ and you took
Me in; I was _____ and you clothed Me; I was _____ and you visited
Me; I was in _____ and you came to Me."

Ephesians 4:23: kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, God, Christ, forgave
Romans 12:10: affectionate, brotherly love, honor, preference
2 Peter 1:5-7: diligence, faith, self-control, brotherly kindness, love
1 Corinthians 13:4: suffers long, kind, envy, parade, puffed up
Galatians 5:22-23: fruit, Spirit, peace, kindness, gentleness
Matthew 25:35, 36: food, drink, stranger, naked, sick, prison



Intelligent Design

Owen D. Olbricht

Legislators in various states of the United States of America are seeking to include in school curriculum “intelligent design”, as an option to non-intelligent design as the source of all forms of life on the earth.

Time magazine carried an article by Charles Krauthammer, August, 8, 2005, p. 78, “Let’s Have No More Monkey Trials”. The title has reference to the trial of John T. Scopes, a school teacher who was accused of violating the Anti-evolution law of Tennessee. In this Dayton, Tennessee trial, William Jennings Bryan was the prosecuting attorney and Clarence Seward Darrow represented the defense. The article is critical of those who want to give students a choice other than atheistic evolution as an explanation for the existence of all life forms.

The Criticism

Krauthammer wrote that there are “new and gratuitous attempts to invade science, and most particularly evolution, with religion. ...In Kansas, conservative school-board members are attempting to rewrite statewide

EVIDENCES

standards for teaching evolution to make sure that creationism's modern stepchild — intelligent design — infiltrates the curriculum. Similar anti-Darwinian mandates are already in place in Ohio, and are being fought over in 20 states."

The Reason to Object

In decrying "intelligent design", Krauthammer stated, "Science begins not with first principles but with observation and experimentation". Later he stated, "This new attack claims that because there are gaps in evolution, they therefore must be filled by a divine intelligent designer. ...There are gaps in science everywhere. ...To teach faith as science is to undermine the very idea of science, which is the acquisition of new knowledge through hypothesis, experimentation and evidence."

The Solution

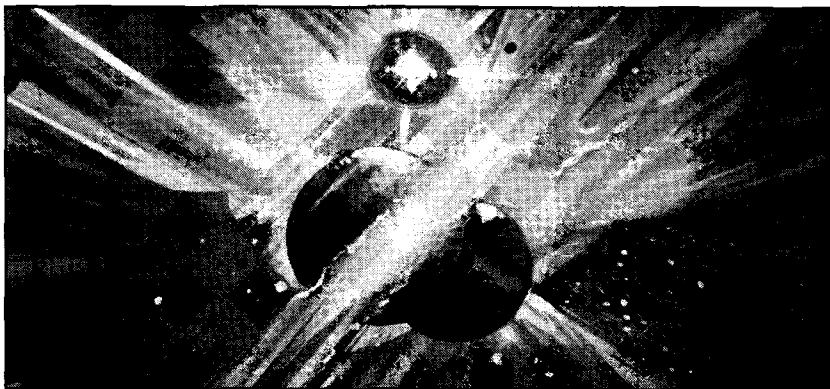
The very criticism Krauthammer makes is the very problem he faces. If gaps, which he admits, appear in the purported evolutionary scale, on what basis does he conclude that blind chance filled the gaps? He has no information or proof as to how the gaps were bridged. If there were solid evidence, then there would be no concern over the gaps. There is no observation and experimentation that can give evidence to fill in the gaps, and no human beings were present to testify as to how the various species were formed. The only recourse he has is faith, a faith that materialistic non-intellectual forces somehow spanned the gaps and brought about the differing forms of life, an assumption for which he has no evidence.

The question is, which has the ability to produce all the distinctive living forms without any connection between each form, intellectual or non-intellectual design? All that is known about the capability of non-intellect reveals that it does not have the ability to bridge the gaps that exist in order to bring about intelligent design.

Conclusion

The only known source that is capable of bringing about such design as that found in the universe is intellect. For this reason the most scientific explanation for distinctive living forms, with no known connection because of gaps between them, is that they were formed by an intelligent designer, namely, God. All other explanations are based on blind faith, without evidence, that non-intellect is able to leap the gaps and bring about all the billions of different life forms. †

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



It Is Supposed...

Bob Cruse

It is supposed by some in the scientific community that in the eternity before time and life began, a gigantic explosion occurred. These learned individuals cannot explain the origin of the material that exploded. The cause of the explosion is likewise a great mystery to them. This "big bang", it is theorized, scattered billions of enormous chunks of this mysterious material into the surrounding expanse. The assumption is that these lifeless chunks, without any intelligent assistance, became planets and arranged themselves into complex solar systems. How these colossal heavenly bodies sustain themselves in space and function in precise harmony with each other remains totally unexplained by our unbelieving friends. We detect no

wonderment among them when their most advanced telescopes utterly fail to reach the outer limits of this majestic celestial display.

Numerous other suppositions and assumptions arise from these basic theories. Possibly the most glaring of these is that particles of "dust" from the "big bang" settled on planet Earth. After hundreds of millions of years, these scientists postulate, an unknown number of these infinitesimal bits of lifeless material mysteriously sprang into life. Hundreds of millions of years later, it is conjectured, they had somehow blended themselves together into microscopic animals. Over many more million years, these one-celled animals banded together and made themselves into larger animals that swim in water or

walk on land. And the process continued, some "scientists" surmise, over billions of years, until monkeys evolved and finally transformed themselves into human beings.

All these guesses, suggestions, and hints fail miserably to meet the test of "true science". Since Charles Darwin's death in 1882, the world's most brilliant evolutionists have sought diligently — but unsuccessfully — to authenticate his theories or demonstrate them to be true. Godless evolution remains, simply, a belief system wholly void of evidence. Its only alternative — creation by an omniscient God — stands as the most logical and reasonable explanation for this magnificent universe we live in.

Reason compels us to ask why evolution appears as "science" in books from which our children are forced to study. Why are public school teachers allowed to teach evolution as science? Why are teachers who believe the Bible record of creation not allowed to place their beliefs alongside the totally unscientific beliefs of evolutionism? And, why are members of the Lord's body so complacent and so ineffectual in opposing anti-biblical theories that threaten the faith of our children? †

Bob Cruse lives in Oak Leaf, Texas, USA.

Application Is Almost Everything.

A soap manufacturer and a minister were walking together down a street in a large city. The soap manufacturer casually said, "The Gospel you preach hasn't done much good, has it? Just observe. There is still a lot of wickedness in the world, and a lot of wicked people, too!"

The minister made no reply until they passed a dirty little child making mud pies in the gutter. Seizing the opportunity, the minister said, "I see that soap hasn't done much good in the world, for there is much dirt and many dirty people around."

The soap manufacturer replied, "Oh, well soap is only useful when it is applied."

The minister said, "Exactly, so it is with the gospel."

— Selected



Romans 1:18-32



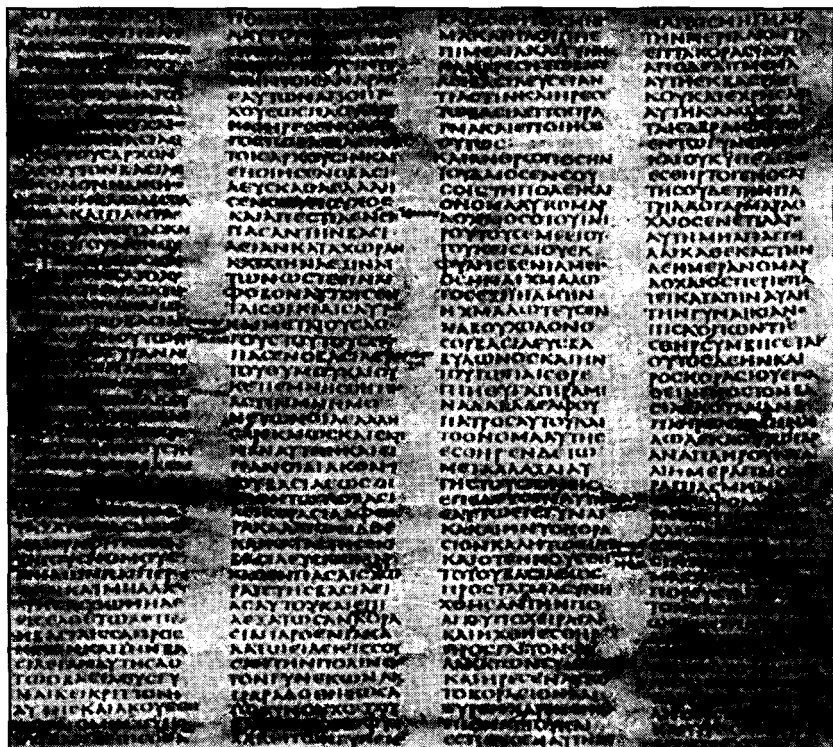
1. What are the things that God is directing His wrath towards? (vs. 18)
2. Do we have the opportunity to know God? (vs. 19, 20)
3. Where can we look to see God's attributes and know that He exists? (vs. 20)
4. When we choose to ignore the evidence that God exists, and choose not to praise and thank Him, what happens to us? (vs. 21, 22)
5. In the reading, how did those with darkened, foolish hearts try to change God? (vs. 22, 23, 25)
6. If God does not force us to worship Him, and mankind chooses not to be close to God, what option is left for God to take? (vs. 24, 26, 28)
7. What was the lie they chose to believe? (vs. 25)
8. What does God think about homosexuality? (vs. 26, 27)
9. What are the difference(s) between our society and the one written about in this reading? (vs. 29 & 30)
10. Did these individuals know that this behavior was wrong? (vs. 32)
11. Why would they approve of others who did the same? (vs. 32)



(See inside of back cover for answers.)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. **24** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **25** who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. **26** For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. **27** Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. **28** And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting. **29** being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, **30** backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, **31** undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; **32** who, knowing the righteous judgement of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

New King James Version



Safeguards Against False Teaching

Clarence DeLoach

Peter's second correspondence with those who "had obtained like precious faith" is one of the strongest denunciations of "destructive doctrines", "damnable heresies", and "false teachers" that you will find in all the New Testament.

The key word is "knowledge", found ten times in three chapters. The best safeguard against what is false is to know the truth. Counterfeits are easily detected if one knows the real item. Peter's emphasis was to "stir minds" that they would be "mindful of the words spoken by the holy prophets and the apostles of the Lord Jesus" (2 Peter 3:1,2).

THE WORD OF GOD

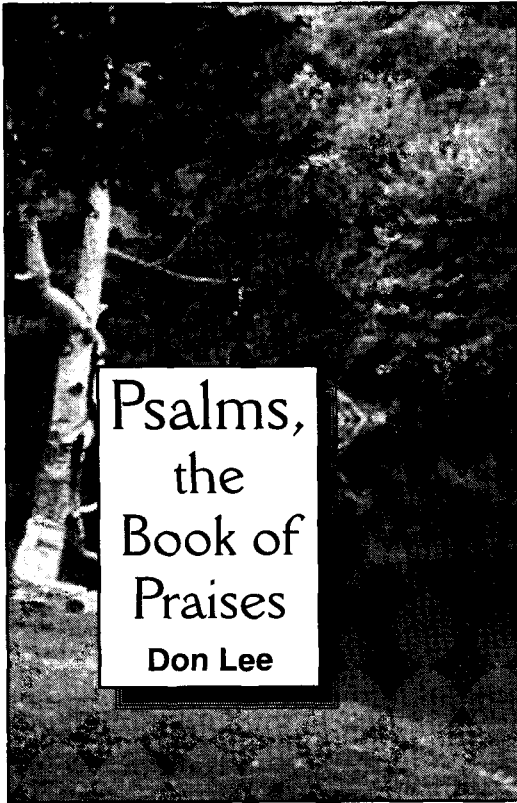
Peter's emphasis upon the Word of God is described by three wonderful facts:

1. **First, it is the shining Word.** The world lies in darkness. Evil men love darkness. But, the Word shines in a dark place! The glorious Gospel can bring a "*new day*" and the "*morning star*" to lives (2 Peter 1:19). Paul's mission was "*to turn men from darkness to light*" by preaching the Gospel (Acts 26:18). The "*light of the gospel*" can remove the veil of blindness caused by sin and false doctrine. Christians everywhere are challenged to "*hold fast the word of life*" and thus "*shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15,16).
2. **Second, it is the sure Word.** Peter mentioned the fact that he was an "*eyewitness of His majesty*" and had heard "*the voice from the Excellent Glory*" on the Mount (2 Peter 1:16,17). Then, he quickly added, "*We also have the prophetic word made more sure*" (2 Peter 1:19a). What a testimony to the accuracy and dependability of the inspired Word! David said, "*The testimony of the Lord is sure*" (Psalm 19:7) and, "*your precepts are right concerning all things*" (Psalm 119:128). The Word is sure, true, right on everything it touches.
3. **Third, it is the Spirit-given Word.** Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The very words of Holy Scripture are "*God-breathed*". The Word is "divine revelation" plus "inspired-transmission".

There is no greater preventive to false doctrine than to love and know the truth. The Word is shining, sure, and Spirit-given. Take Peter's reminders to heart and you won't be one of the unstable souls taken in and exploited by false teaching. †

Clarence DeLoach works with the Pond Church of Christ in Dickson, Tennessee, USA.

***How can you have faith in the
Bible unless you know
what's in it?***



Introduction:

One of the most popular books of the Bible is Psalms. The title comes from the Greek word *psalmoi* which means “songs”. The Hebrew title is *tehilim* which signifies “praises”. It has also been called “The Book of Hymns” or “The Book of Praises”.

There are 150 Psalms. David wrote 73 of them. 12 were written by Asaph, 12 by the sons of Korah, 2 by Solomon, 1 by Moses, 1 by Ethan, and 49 are anonymous.

The Book of Psalms is actually 5 books. They are divided like this: Book 1: Chapters 1-41; Book 2: Chapters 42-72; Book 3: Chapters 73-89; Book 4: Chapters 90-106; and Book 5: Chapters 107-150.

Because the Book of Psalms was written by several writers and written over a period of many years, the hymns were gradually collected and used in Jewish worship. We don't know why they are in the order in which they now appear, but they have been fixed in this order for more than 2000 years.

The Book of Psalms is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. There is only one Old Testament book referred to by “chapter” number specifically in the New Testament. Acts 13:33 says, “As it is written in the second Psalm, ‘Thou are My son, today I have begotten Thee’”, quoted from Psalm 2:7. There are 115 additional quotations from Psalms in the New Testament.

The Old Testament was divided by the Hebrews into The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. In some manuscripts, Psalms appears as the

THE WORD OF GOD

first book of The Writings. Psalms has been a favorite to many, maybe for the comfort found there, maybe for the poetic-type writing, maybe for the Messianic prophecies, maybe for praises to God.

Chapter 1: The righteous and the wicked contrasted.

1. *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*
2. *But his delight is in the law of the LORD and in His law he meditates day and night.*
3. *And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*
4. *The wicked are not so; but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.*
5. *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*
6. *For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

In Chapter 1, we find that no author is named. Some think David, who became King of Israel, perhaps about 1048 BC, was the writer. Others think it was Ezra, who lived about 536 BC, some 500 years later than David. The dates I use are from my Thompson Chain Reference Bible.

Chapter 1 is a psalm of doctrinal instruction. It can be divided into two parts: (1) the happiness of the godly (verses 1-3) and (2) the unhappiness of the ungodly.

I'd like to look at some key words in this chapter. In verse 1, we have the word "blessed", which also means happy — "*How happy is the man ...*". "Wicked" can also mean guilty, unrighteous, morally wrong, ungodly or vicious. "Path" can mean way, course of life, or journey. "Sinners" can also be criminal offenders. "Seat" can mean assembly, inhabited places, situation, or sojourning. The Hebrew word for "scoffers" (*Luwts*) literally means "make mouths", similar to the way we use "mouthing off". It also means mockers, scornful, or deriders.

In verse 2, "delight" also means pleasure, wish, or desire. "Law" can also be instruction, doctrine, regulation, direction, precept, or statute. The Hebrew term for "meditates" (*Hagah*) can describe a low moaning sound like that of a dove (Isaiah 38:14; 59:11) or the growling of a lion which has trapped its prey (Isaiah 31:4) Here, though, it is referring to righteous ponderings. It is possible that the Scriptures were read audibly during the process of

THE WORD OF GOD

mediation. Meditating on God's Holy Word is more than a fleeting glimpse. A footnote from the New King James Version says "ponders by talking to himself". "Day" and "night" can be taken literally or can also mean in good times or bad.

In verse 3, "Streams of water" can also mean canals or as a footnote from the New King James Version, "channels". "Season" can also mean time, the right time, the proper time; in the plural it can be circumstances, courses of time, occurrences or events. Here are 3 principle situations for "season".. (1) Regular events, (2) the appropriate time for a nonrecurring incident, and (3) a set time (from the **Lexical Aids to the Old Testament: Key Word Study Bible**). "Leaf" can be foliage, not just one leaf on the tree but all of them. "In whatever he does, he prospers", or all that he does prospers. "Does" is work, labor, make, create, construct, build, accomplish, acquire, earn, procure, prepare, offer, or fulfill. "Doing" shows faithfulness. There is no halfway in doing God's will.

In verse 4, the Hebrew word for "wind" (*Ruwach*) is an interesting term used here. The basic meaning is air in motion. Rushing air through one's nose (a snort) depicts emotions of aggressiveness (Isaiah 25:4) or anger. The wicked are not rooted in God like the righteous in verse 3. This passage reminds me of Matthew 7:24-27: *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sands. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."*

In verses 5 and 6, "judgment" can be a sentence, a formal decree, justice, right, or privilege. "Assembly" can also mean meeting, congregation, family, troop, gang, or crowd. "Righteous" is one who is just, lawful, honest. "Knows" can also mean approves or has regard. "Perish" means destroy or fail. It suggests utter defeat or to wander about aimlessly without orientation, to be lost, whether literally or morally.

Humans have grown so self-assured in their own powers that many either no longer believe there is a God, or they have forgotten that we will all answer to Him in judgment. But God is real, and now is the time to prepare to meet Him.



Don Lee is a Christian writer in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

1 Timothy 1:8-10

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,

9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

Christians are to be law-abiding, praying for their government and leaders, paying taxes, and being good citizens — unless a law violates the Scriptures. In such a case, it should be with us as it was with Christians of the first century, that we would be faithful to God even if it meant that we would die for our faith.

Historically, God has sometimes arbitrarily said “do this” or “do that”, and when a human disobeyed, he sinned. But some behavior is inherently wrong and sinful, because it breaks the laws of truth and right.

The sins in this list in first Timothy are such inherent wrongs: it is a violation of all that is true for a person to take the life of another person; it is inherently wrong for a person to speak what he knows to be a lie; it is inherently wrong for a person to commit his/her body sexually to anyone other than a marriage partner, because inherent in the creation of man and woman is the fact of belonging only to each other, as with Adam and Eve. It is inherently wrong for men and women to practice sodomy or any other perversion of the normal recreative drives God has implanted in humans.

Historically, man's laws condemn these wrongs. When they cease to do so, evil times will inevitably come.

But, for the most part, government and laws are the servants of Christians. We benefit by the controls that curb violence and crime. In our respect for the laws of the land, we are to be obedient: not cheating on taxes, not breaking speed limits, not picking and choosing which “unimportant” laws to keep or to ignore. In honesty before God, we are to be law-abiding citizens, so that the law is good because we use it lawfully.

So,
just as Paul wrote to Timothy, people who are righteous seldom feel any constraints of law. Why? Because the laws are made to control evil-doers. This passage lists some of the evils of the world, describing them as things that are contrary to sound doctrine. The “sound doctrine” of Scripture is based on truth and fact, not an arbitrary rule.



Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice

Betty Burton Choate

The Blood of the Covenant

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *"Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:27,28).

Just as His body is life in us, so His blood also is life in us. In the physical world we see blood only when there is a malfunction. If the problem is severe enough, the person dies, so blood and death have become irrevocably joined together in our minds.

Yet, from the beginning God said, *"You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood"* (Genesis 9:4).

What are the properties and functions of blood within the physical body? How is blood the life of the body?

Blood: The Life of the Body

We are beings composed of approximately one hundred trillion living cells. Each of those cells is dependent on the flow of blood for continuity of life, so — amazingly — every single cell is within reaching distance of the network of 60,000 miles of arteries, vessels, and capillaries that make up this vital system! Like a tremendous river branching out and out to feed and water every particle of the earth without flooding it, so the blood services the body.

But what does it do? There are three primary functions: nourishing, cleansing, and protecting.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Blood Nourishes

One of the components of blood is the red blood cells. Their work is to nourish and to cleanse each of the trillions of cells within the body. In this river that flows through our bodies, the red blood cells might be compared to a continuous line of barges, loaded with the necessary food, minerals, and oxygen. Each cell is able to draw from this 24-hour supply whatever it needs for its own sustenance. The trip through the body's circulatory system takes about 20 seconds. As the barges are unloaded, they pick up waste materials from the cells and take their new burden to the kidneys. After being cleaned there, they return to the heart to begin another cycle of nourishing and cleansing the entire body.

As long as the body cells have access to the oxygen and nutrients they need, and as long as the waste materials are being continuously removed, the cells remain healthy and normal, carrying out their own work within the body's very complex system. But if the supply of blood is cut off, cells will immediately begin to feel the effect of the loss of oxygen and the build-up of toxins. Without oxygen, the body will die in a few minutes.

We can overcome the world because our Lord has already overcome, and we are covered through His blood.

Blood 'Overcomes'

The white blood cells are our defense system. Since the body can be invaded from any point, it is necessary that every cell be guarded by warrior cells in the blood stream. Protection from invaders is the first work of these cells. When an enemy comes, they are the defenders of the body, fighting to overcome whatever threatens life.

In this age of near-miraculous medicines, we take antibiotics and then we mistakenly attribute our recovery to the drugs. But drugs only help to hold invaders at bay until a sufficient number of white blood cells can be programmed to overcome them. No drug, alone, without the white cells of the body's own immunity system, can destroy all of the viral or bacterial invaders. 'AIDS' confirms this truth in bold underscored lettering.

Blood Cleanses

The third work of white cells is the clean-up after the enemy has been destroyed. Continually, damaged and dead cells from all over the body must be removed in order that living cells may do their work unimpeded. Infection,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

redness, swelling, fever, and soreness are indicators telling us that our blood is effectively carrying out its responsibilities of defence and clean-up.

Yes, we associate blood with death because we usually see it only when it is being spilled from the body. But, second by second, blood is sustaining life within our bodies. Understanding this, it is easier for us to see why Jesus lifted the cup at the supper and said, "*Drink from it ... this is My blood ...*" (Matthew 26:27,28).

We can also better understand why He said, "*... whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life ...*" (John 6:54), because life [nourishment, as well as the essence of life] is in the blood. We can see why we are taught, "*... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7), just as the blood removes toxins from the body. We can see why the Scriptures say, "*... they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb*" (Revelation 12:11), showing that we can overcome sin because His blood in us has *already* overcome (John 16:33).

We partake of the fruit of the vine, the memorial of His blood, so that His blood may do for our souls what our own flow of blood does for our physical bodies. †

Betty Burton Choate is the author of the study, JESUS CHRIST THE ETERNAL SACRIFICE. This lesson, and the following lessons by sister Choate, will be taken from that book. It is also available as a study book for young people.

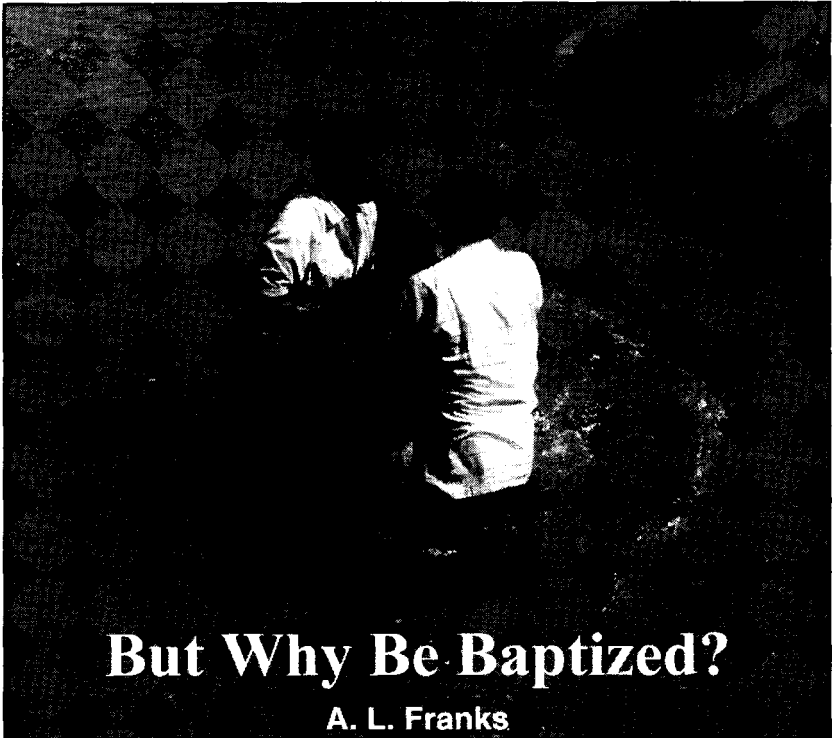
Nailed to the Cross

There was One who was willing to die in my stead
That a soul so unworthy might live;
And the path to the cross He was willing to tread,
All the sins of my life to forgive.

He is tender and loving and patient with me,
While He cleanses my heart of its dross,
But "there's no condemnation", I know I am free,
For my sins are all nailed to the cross.

They are nailed to the cross! they are nailed to the cross! Oh, how much He was willing to bear! With what anguish and loss, Jesus went to the cross, but He carried my sins with Him there!

— Carrie E. Breck



But Why Be Baptized?

A. L. Franks

Example No. 1

God gave the city of Jericho to the nation of Israel (Joshua 6:2). Yet, He required the Israelites to do something. God commanded the army to march around the city once each day for six days.

On the seventh day God required the Israelites to "*compass the city seven times*". Afterwards, God commanded the priests to blow with trumpets and all the people to shout with a loud voice (Joshua 6:1-5).

The results? "*The wall of the city fell down flat*" (Joshua 6:20), enabling the Israelites to enter the city and completely subdue Jericho.

What caused the walls of Jericho to fall down flat? Was it the marching? The blowing? The shouting? No. Not really. Question: In all of recorded history, what other city walls have been brought down by marching, blowing, and/or shouting?

The walls of the city fell down flat because God brought them down,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

but He didn't bring them down until His people evidenced their faith in Him by doing what He commanded. They marched (13 trips!); they blew; they shouted. Their faith in God was shown when they did what was required. Also notice that what God required the Israelites to do seemingly had no connection whatsoever with the final results.

Example No. 2

The Bible tells about Naaman, said to be *"a great and honorable"* man. He was captain of the Syrian army; yet, he was sorely afflicted with leprosy (2 Kings 5:1). Naaman came into contact with a prophet of God who commanded the leprous captain to *"Go and wash in Jordan seven times"* with the promise, *"...and thou shalt be clean"* (2 Kings 5:10). Naaman refused to obey. He became angry. He went away in a rage. The command to *"wash in Jordan"* didn't make any sense to him.

Finally, however, after his servant reasoned with him, Naaman did what God's prophet commanded. He went down to the Jordan River and *"dipped himself seven times, according to the saying of the man of God."* The results? *"His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean"* (2 Kings 5:10-14). Naaman was made well!

What cleansed Naaman? He was cleansed of leprosy because God chose to cleanse him, but, He did not cleanse him until Naaman evidenced his faith and obeyed God by dipping seven times in the river. And, that which God required of Naaman seemingly had no connection whatsoever with the final results.

Example No. 3

Jesus came into contact with a man who was born blind (John 9:1). In addition to teaching the needed lesson that the man's blindness was not caused by his sin or the sin of his parents, Jesus began a healing procedure which was, to say the least, very unorthodox. Jesus spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and then anointed the eyes of the blind man. He put moistened clay in the man's eyes! He then commanded the blind man to *"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"*.

In faith, the blind man obeyed the unusual command. The Bible says, *"He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing"* (John 9:7). Jesus healed the man. For the first time in his life, he could see. What a healing! Consider: In all of recorded history, who else was ever healed of blindness in this same way?

What caused the blind man to see? It was the Lord. Jesus healed the

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

man, but not until he evidenced his faith by obeying the commandments of Jesus. And, what was required of the blind man seemingly had no connection whatsoever with the outcome.

Summary

God commanded the Israelites to march, blow, and shout. When His commands were obeyed by the believing Israelites, they enjoyed God's blessings. The walls fell down flat. God commanded Naaman to dip in the river. When he finally showed his faith by obeying, he enjoyed the blessing of God. His leprosy was gone! Jesus commanded the blind man to wash clay from his eyes in a pool. When he obeyed, he was blessed with glorious sight for the first time in his life.

Consider Baptism

The Savior said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...*" (Mark 16:16). An apostle commanded, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of your sins...*" (Acts 2:38). An inspired disciple commanded Saul of Tarsus, "*Arise, be baptized and wash away thy sins...*" (Acts 22:16). Finally, the apostle Peter wrote, "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...*" (1 Peter 3:21).

The above Scriptures clearly teach the following four things about baptism. 1. Baptism *precedes* salvation. 2. Baptism *comes before* the remission of sins. 3. Baptism *washes away* sins. 4. Baptism *saves*.

But Why Be Baptized?

You may still ask, "But why be baptized?" The answer is: for the same reason the Israelites marched, blew, and shouted. For the same reason Naaman dipped in the Jordan River. For the same reason the blind man washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam.

In each example, faith was evidenced through obedience; that is, doing exactly what God said, even though there was apparently no connection whatsoever with the actions taken and the blessings given. The response of man's faith in obedience to God brought blessings — to the Israelites, to Naaman, and to the blind man.

So it is with baptism. To be baptized evidences faith in Jesus. It is doing what He said, although there seems to be no connection with water baptism and forgiveness of sins. Baptism is an act of faith. It is required. It is necessary. Have you been baptized scripturally? †

A. L. Franks is the editor of *Magnolia Messenger* and lives in Kosciusko, Mississippi, USA.

Miracles Happened and Miracles Ceased

Charles Box

The Bible teaches that miracles both happened and ceased. Men in our city and across our nation claim to be miracle workers today. I believe what the Bible teaches about miracles. Therefore I believe these men are frauds.

Believers in Christ are not the only people in the world today who claim the power to do miracles. "Holy men" in every religion make the same claim. Believers in Christ would dispute their power to work *real* miracles. On what basis would they say that such men cannot do what they claim? **On the basis that the gods they worship, the doctrines they teach, the things they practice are contrary to the Bible.**

We are convinced that we do not have to prove or disprove their claims to do miracles. The very fact that their god and their doctrine are wrong is proof that their miracles are not genuine.

The same proof applies to "miracle workers" who claim to believe in Christ. We can know if their "miracles" are true by the doctrine they teach and the life they live.

For the following reasons, we know that these men and women are

not doing anything by God's power, and that people are being deceived by their glitzy performances:

They do not teach the gospel plan of salvation. God's plan of salvation is for a penitent believer to confess faith in Jesus and be baptized for salvation (Acts 2:36-41). Most of those who claim miracles today teach salvation through the "sinners prayer" and mental acceptance of Jesus. **Would God give miracles to false teachers who deny the Gospel of Christ?**

They do not teach New Testament worship. Most of the so-called "Miracle Working" churches have women in leadership roles, mechanical instruments of all kinds, they do not observe communion weekly, and they participate in other acts of worship foreign to the New Testament. (Read I Corinthians 14:34, Acts 20:7, Ephesians 5:19.) **Will God give real miracles to those who teach and practice false worship?**

They do not practice Bible miracles. These religious racketeers bleed as much money as they can from the poor, unsuspecting, and helpless. They make a mockery out

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

of Christianity. They do no real miracles. Jesus and His apostles performed great miracles, real miracles!

Nicodemus said, "*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (John 3:2). Matthew 15:30 says, "*Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them.*" Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves and caused the great calm (Matthew 8:26). No one is doing these miracles today!

When Tammy Faye Baker came down with cancer, why did no miracle worker heal her? Why did she go to doctors and hospitals for her treatment? When Oral Robert's daughter was killed in a car wreck, why did he not raise her from the dead? Why are today's "miracles" that are performed on stages before thousands always dealing with arthritis or heart trouble or some other *unseen* problem? Why are there no legs restored, why are no blind given sight, no dead raised?

Jesus promised His disciples that they would be able to do miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, which He would give them. Mark 16:20 affirms: "*And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying*

signs." Even in the first century, there was a **reason** for miracles: to confirm that the word being preached was truly the message of God. Would God empower people today to do miracles when the message they are teaching contradicts the message of the first century?

Miracles ceased when the perfect or complete revelation was received. "*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But **when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.***"

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:8-13.)

When the last words of the New Testament were written in about 96 A.D., miracles had ceased. The only miracles we need today are those written in the Bible. †

Charles Box works with the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

10

Reasons Why the CHURCH OF CHRIST IS the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

1. You can read about it in the New Testament ...

Romans 16:16

2. It has no creed but the Bible and binds no name on its members but Christ's ...

1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26

3. It speaks where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent ...

1 Peter 4:11

4. It exalts Christ as the only Head of the church ...

Colossians 1:18

5. Its acts of worship are patterned strictly after New Testament example ...

John 4:24; Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

6. It teaches that scriptural unity can be achieved without compromise ...

1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:21

7. It is not a denomination, or a group of denominations, but the body of Christ, with Christ as its founder ...

Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:18

8. Its aim is to save souls by leading them to Christ by the Gospel, to teach godly living, and to help all in need ...

1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 6:10

9. Those who are added to the church by obedience are in Christ where all spiritual blessings reside ...

Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:3

10. Its future is eternal glory with Christ ...

1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Adapted by Danny Box from an article by Paul Sain, Pulaski, TN, USA.



Separated From God!

Loy Mitchell

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1,2).

The children of Israel had returned from exile, but they were experiencing affliction and calamity. What was the problem? Why were they being given no help?

1. The Problem Was Not an Impotent God

Yes, some indicated that God was the problem. Has the Lord's

hand become so short that it can no longer save us? Has God become deaf? Can He no longer hear us? Where has God gone? Why is He so far away? Perhaps a good question to ask is this: If God seems far away, who moved?

2. The Problem Was Sin.

Israel had allowed iniquity to enter. They were living lawless lives. They were breaking God's commands. Their hands were filled with blood (verse 3). They were conceiving evil and bringing forth iniquity. Thus God could have no fellowship with such people. God

had hidden His face from them. This was His way to show His disapproval. His arm could have saved them. He could have heard their cries, but **sin** had made a separation.

3. Sin Remains the Problem Today.

What are the sins we see today which separate men from God? The same ones that kept Israel from receiving blessings from God over 2,000 years ago. Paul calls these sins "works of the flesh".

"The works of the flesh are well known, which are fornication, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, wraths, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envies, instances of drunkenness, revelries, and such like; of which things I tell you beforehand, even as I told you previously, that those who practice such things shall not inherit God's kingdom" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Dear reader, look into your own life. Are you separated from God? You are if sin is in your life. I beg you to repent! Turn from sin today. If you have never obeyed the Gospel, then believe in Jesus Christ, leave every sin, confess His name before men, and be

baptized into Christ. Only Christ can reconcile you to God (Colossians 1:22).

If you have become a Christian, but have fallen back into sin, repent. Confess your wrong doings and pray to God (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:8-21). He can and will forgive those who obey Him. †

Loy Mitchell is a missionary to Zimbabwe now living in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

My Friend

I have a friend I turn to
Each and every day.
He's always there to guide me
If I should go astray.

He gives me strength when I am weak,
He calms my anger, too.
Each and every tiresome day
He helps me make it through.

Although I cannot see Him
I know without a doubt;
That when I'm sinking deep in sin
He will pull me out.

I'll love my friend forever.
We'll never grow apart.
'Cause while I'm living in this world
I have Jesus in my heart.

— Aubri Finley

The New Life

Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:8-11).

After a person has left the world of darkness and entered into the kingdom of God's dear Son with all its glorious light, he is to act in a completely different manner. The former acts are to be left behind; a whole new way of life should begin and continue until death or the second coming of Christ. What does this new life entail?

A NEW RULER

The *old* man, under the domination of Satan is now a *new man* in Christ, under the loving rule of his Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ. The harsh servitude of the Devil has been exchanged for the voluntary reign of God; the bondage to sin for the dominion of righteousness. Paul's magnificent comparison to the Roman saints is of great encouragement to Christians. "*As sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 5:21).

A NEW MIND SET

The old man of sin set his mind on the flesh and how to gratify its desires. The new man in Christ sets his mind on the things of the Spirit. Paul affirmed, "*To set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the things of the Spirit is life and peace*" (Romans 8:6). To the Colossians, Paul held up the high and noble challenge, "*If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God; Set your mind on things above...*" (Colossians 3:1,2).

In a world that is corrupt and in the process of passing away, it seems the Christian is encompassed on every hand by evil and is enticed to think about sordid and base things. However, even if you must stand alone, think of these things:

WHATEVER is:

TRUE — that which is worthy of praise; thus is real or *genuine*.

SALVATION

HONORABLE — that which is venerable, dignified; thus, not frivolous, but what is *important*.

JUST — that which is approved, commended; therefore, no effort to be shady or tricky, but *above-board*.

PURE — that which is chaste, innocent, blameless; thus, think on the things that have all the *dross removed*. Only the good remains.

LOVELY — that which is acceptable, amicable; thus, does not lead to conflict but contributes to *harmony*.

GRACIOUS — that which causes a good report, what is reputable or favorable, therefore is *optimistic*.

If one thinks in this manner, Paul concluded that such would be of **VIRTUE** (of worth, value) and thus would cause one to break out in **PRAISE** — applauding the good and its effect.

NEW GOALS

If we have changed our minds, we have new aims and aspirations in life. Our primary goal is to become like Jesus who called us out of the world to Himself. **We want to be like HIM!** This becomes a constant and ever increasingly important desire of the saint as a joint-heir of Christ. Its effect is pointedly depicted by John. *"Everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself even as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

NEW CONDUCT

The real key to transition is the new life lived in harmony with, and

motivated by, the change in rulers, mind, and goals. It is reflected in behavior, in these ways:

1. The Christian is happy to share the good news of Jesus with others. In fact, he uses opportunities in his avocation (working on some job), in recreation, social gatherings, on vacation, etc., to live in such a manner that people will ask, "Why are you so happy while others are unhappy? peaceful while others are distressed? patient while others are impatient? self-controlled while others do what the moment demands?" These questions will provide you the opportunity to explain what Jesus is doing for you, living in your life.

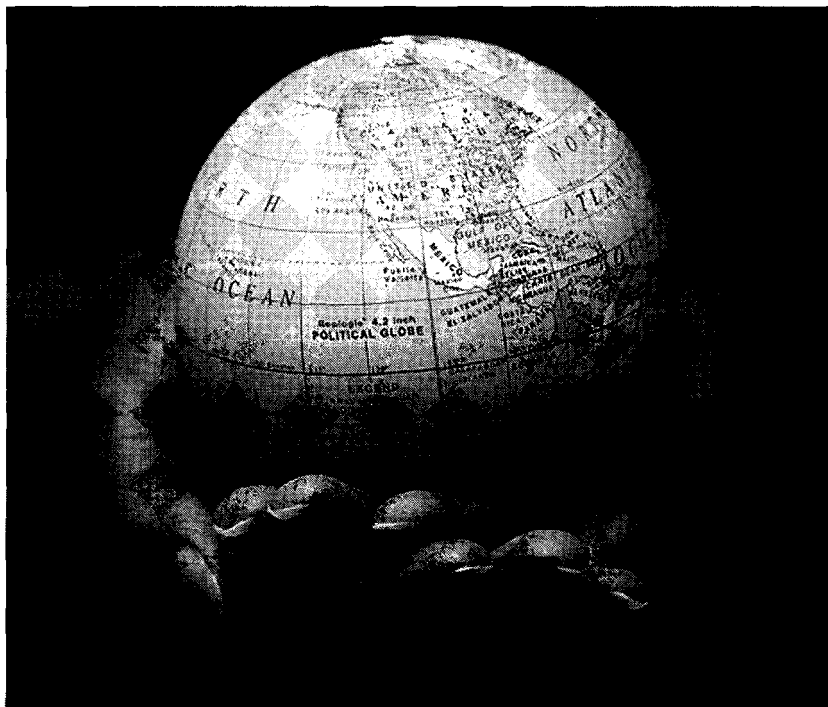
2. The Christian is engaged in doing good to all men as he has the opportunity — visiting the sick and aged, ministering to the widows and orphans, writing letters of encouragement, trying to comfort the bereaved and disconsolate, greeting strangers, praying for friends and enemies — out of appreciation for what God is doing for him.

If the saint is living the new life, he will exclaim with the ex-murderer, Saul of Tarsus, now Paul the blessed apostle of the Lord, *"For me to live is Christ ..."* (Philippians 1:21). So be it. †

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WE ARE A BODY

Gary C. Hampton



If you have ever smashed a finger with a hammer, you know how the body responds to the pain one of its members endures. The mouth yells, the other hand grabs the finger tightly, the stomach turns, and knees weaken. In other words, every member feels the pain, though only one finger suffered the blow.

Paul told the Corinthians that

Christians are all members of one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). In verse 25 he says, *"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."* The church, or spiritual body, should react the same way the physical body does. If one member suffers, we should all feel the pain and work diligently

until the problem is resolved.

Have you ever been too proud to talk to anyone about a problem that was bearing on your mind? Have you ever been afraid to speak up because you thought others would look down on you or laugh at your problem? Such concerns should not hold us back when it comes to fellow members of Christ's body. We ought to be the most caring, responsive people in the world.

This body relationship will move us to lovingly and humbly go to a brother who has sinned and strive to help him see the error of his way (Galatians 6:1,2). It will not allow us to tell others about a wrong done to us by another member, but will cause us to go talk to that offending brother or sister in order to clear the problem (Matthew 5:23,24).

We should pour our energy into enhancing this body relationship. Luke tells us that the early church *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 3:42). We need time together as partners in study, prayer, song, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and joy. Let us resolve to seek opportunities for more togetherness and make such times an uplifting experience. †

Gary C. Hampton is the director of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

Do I Think Differently?

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). What we think is important because, "...as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

Jesus said in His well-known 'Sermon on the Mount' that hatred or lust or anger or covetousness in the heart are sins before God, just as the actions themselves would be, because people usually will go ahead and do whatever they dwell on in their thoughts. Christians are taught, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ...He humbled Himself and became obedient..."* (Philippians 2:5,8). As we follow Jesus, learning from studying the Scriptures to think as He thinks and to mold our lives after His example, our lives reflect godliness. Romans 12:1,2 describe the process: *"...be transformed by the renewing of your mind...."*

In order to be Christ-like, the Christian's thinking must change.

Next: Do I Talk Differently?

All in the Family?

Bill Smith



Some would tell us, "We are saved by grace! To attempt to help God save you by working is useless! When you believe that Jesus died for your sins and accept Him, you are saved! Baptism is a symbol of what God has done and you should be baptized, but it has nothing to do with your salvation. Anyone who believes in Jesus is your brother and worthy of fellowship."

This is a popular statement of faith, made even by some who fill the pulpits of the Lord's church, but **is it true?** Jesus said, "*A man must*

be born again of water and the spirit" (John 3:7). This is obviously a reference to baptism, but if there is any doubt, He later said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16).

Paul informs us, "*You are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" (But notice *how* faith in Jesus saved them.) "**For** *as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*" (And look at the results.) "*If you be in Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise*"

THE CHURCH

(Galatians 3:25-29).

We must experience this new birth. "*A man must be born again*" (John 3:7). Otherwise, we cannot be in the family of God ... the church (1 Timothy 3:15).

All the privileges I have in my earthly family, I derived because I was **born** into it. My family celebrates my birthday every year with a birthday party. They sing to me, give me presents, and cook my

There is no other way to get into *the family* but through the birth process. I may invite you into our house and I may treat you like a brother. I may feel as close to you as I do to my brothers. I may even tell people you are my brother, but **unless you were born into my physical family, you are not a part of it, physically or legally.** You would receive nothing when the heirs' inheritance is distributed!

All the privileges I have in my earthly family, I derived because I was **born** into it. We must also be **born spiritually**, in order to be in God's Family, the church.

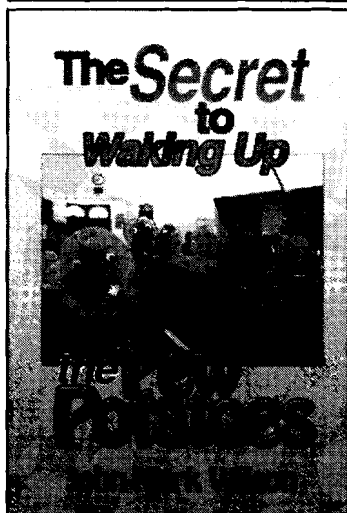
favorite cake. But no one seems to imply I have done something meritorious to have been born. My parents and the doctor took care of that. I just cooperated. I celebrate my birthday because I am glad I was born; my family celebrates it because they are glad I was added to the family. Had I not been born, I would not be in their family.

This is true of my spiritual "new birth". My Father provided the seed in His word; my family (or other caring people, in many cases) implanted the seed and assisted in my delivery (Luke 8:11-15). As instructed in Scripture, I was born of the water and of Spirit (John 3:7), the Spirit giving me new spiritual life at the time of my spiritual birth (Acts 5:32; 2 Corinthians 3:6).

Nor can I add you to my spiritual family, the Lord's church. Again, you may worship with us, we may feel akin, we may accept you as a brother; but you have no hope of an inheritance. Only God can add you to the family (Acts 2:42), and He has carefully explained that this is accomplished through the new birth (vs. 37-42).

All who follow God's instructions can be born again into His family, so if a person desires to be an heir of God, he should listen to and obey God, not some well-meaning friend. Remember, "*... the blind lead the blind and they both fall into the ditch*" (Matthew 15:14). †

Bill Smith is a Christian, living and working in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.



Section Three of Your Personal Work Notebook

You may copy and enlarge the following pages to compile in a folder for ready use! Some of the charts are taken from Mid McKnight's booklet of **Personal Work Charts**.

When you use this notebook, you are obeying Acts 20:20.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Founder Christ MATT. 16:18	Where Jerusalem ISA. 2:3 ACTS 2:5-47	When AD 33 ACTS 2:	Head Christ EPH. 1:22
ORGANIZATION PHIL. 1:1	Elders Tit. 1:5-7, I Pet. 5:1-3, Acts 20:28, I Tim. 3:1-7 Deacons Acts 6:1-6, I Tim. 3:8-13 Members Acts 2:41-47, Col. 1:13, I Cor. 1:2		
NAME EPH. 3:15	Church of God I Cor. 1:2, Acts 20:28 The Body of Christ Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22-23 Churches of Christ Matt. 16:18, Rom. 16:16 Bride of Christ Rom. 7:4, Rev. 21:9		
NAME EPH. 3:15	Disciples John 15:8, Acts 11:26 Saints Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:2, Phil. 1:1 Brethren Luke 8:21, Gal. 6:1 Children Gal. 3:26, I John 2:1 Christians Acts 11:26, 26:28, I Pet. 4:16		
CREED	Jesus Christ Matt. 16:16-18, 10:32-33, Acts 8:37		
RULE OF FAITH & PRACTICE	Word of God Matt. 28:18-20, II Tim. 3:16-17, II Pet. 1:3, Jas. 1:21		
WORSHIP	Sing Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19, I Cor. 14:15, Heb. 2:12 Pray I Thes. 5:17 Teach Acts 5:42 Communion Acts 20:7, I Cor. 11:23 Contribution I Cor. 16:1-2		
MISSION	Save Souls Matt. 5:13-16, John 15:3, 16, I Tim. 4:16, II Tim. 2:2, Heb. 5:12		
WARNING	Be Faithful Matt. 15:9, Matt. 15:13, Gal. 1:6-8, II John 9, Rev. 22:18-19		

(Enlarge this Study and use it freely)

Where God Has Placed Baptism

Before Baptism

The Alien Sinner Is...

Condemned Romans 3:10,23

Dead in Sins Ephesians 2:1


Without God and Hope . . Eph. 2:12

The Alien Sinner Must...

Hear the Gospel. . . Romans 10:17

Believe in Christ John 8:24

Repent of Sins Luke 13:3,5

Enter into Christ by 

Don't Reject the Counsel of God
Luke 7:30

**B
A
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After Baptism

Blessings Obtained...

Saved Mark 16:16

Remission of Sins. . . . Acts 2:38

Wash Away Sins Acts 22:16

Into Jesus Christ..Galatians 3:27

Into One Body 1 Cor. 12:13

Into His Death Romans 6:3,4

Newness of Life Romans 6:4

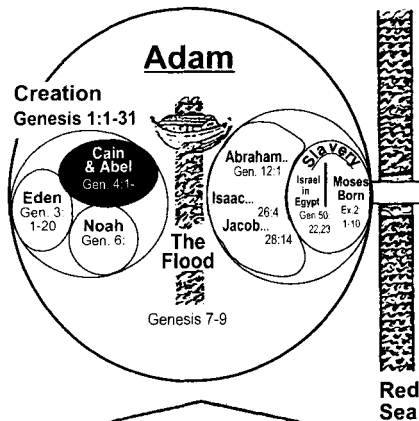
Renewing of Spirit Titus 3:5

Now Saves Us 1 Peter 3:21

"Gladly Receive His Word"
Acts 2:41

51

Family Religion

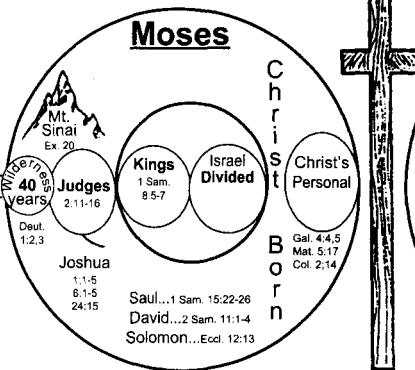


Genesis 12:1

ALTAR

Animal Sacrifice

National Religion



John 1:17

Was schoolmaster Gal. 3:24
Was abolished Col. 2:14

TABERNACLE

Passover

Sabbath

International Religion



John 1:17

Gospel

Rom. 1:16

Lord's Supper

Church

Acts 2:47

Lord's Day

CHURCH GROWTH

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

ITS ORIGIN

Inspired ..2 Timothy 3:16
 Holy SpiritJohn 16:13
 Holy Men..... 2 Peter 1:21
 36 Men1500 Years
 66 Books Completed 96 A.D
 1200 languages & Dialects

ITS PURPOSE

Keeps From Sin Ps. 119:11
 Lights Our Way Ps.119:105
 Enlightens Us....2 Tim. 3:15
 Instructs Us ..2 Tim. 3:16,17
 Purifies Us1 Pet. 1:22
 Frees Us.....John 8:32
 Saves UsJas. 1:21;

ITS COMPLETENESS

All TruthJohn 16:13
 All Things2 Pet. 1:3
 Whole Counsel ..Acts 20:27

ITS INDESTRUCTIBILITY

Lasts ForeverMt. 24:35;
1 Peter 1:25

THE BIBLE WARNS

Do Not Add to Nor Subtract.....Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev 22:18,19
 Do Not Substitute Human IdeasMark 7:7-9
 Preach and Teach Only God's Word2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 4:11
 Believe No Other GospelGalatians 1:8
 His Word Will Judge UsJohn 12:48

THE BIBLE ANSWERS THREE QUESTIONS

1. The Origin Of LifeWhere Did I Come From?
2. The Purpose Of LifeWhy Am I Here?
3. After DeathWhere Am I Going?

THE BIBLE CONTAINS

The Mind Of God
 The State Of Man
 The Way Of Salvation
 The Happiness Of Believers
 The Doom of Sinners

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Gordon Hogan

While serving as a missionary in Singapore some years ago, I received a telephone call from a friend in the United States to tell me that a certain brother who had acquired some fame among us, particularly in the United States, as a lecturer on Church Growth had expressed an interest in coming to Singapore to speak on the subject. While I honor the brother for his research of this subject and would have certainly welcomed his help, it seems to me that we simply need to get busy doing what the Lord has instructed us to do, what we already know to do, if we are concerned about church growth.

WE ARE NOT HERE TO:

1. Impose our opinions, culture or traditions on people.
2. To feed our personal egos.
3. To obtain academic degrees at the expense of the church.
4. Not here as hybrid religious professionals but rather as servants, a part of the "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9).

OUR PURPOSE:

In times past when Christians have had a clear understanding about our purpose in the world, there was a fervency for evangelism and church planting, best described by the prophet Jeremiah as "fire in our bones": *"... his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot"* (Jeremiah 20:9).

THE FOCUS OF THE CHURCH

What I write now grows out of my experience in Singapore and neighboring Southeast Asian countries. I am also indebted to Roger Rush for observations he made in a Gospel Advocate article that touched on this subject.

CHURCH GROWTH

We are living in exciting times, times when opportunities for evangelism may well be unprecedented. But to take advantage of these opportunities we must know clearly *why we are here*. Rush quoted from an article in the December 17, 1990 Newsweek magazine — granted, some 16 years past, but still relevant. The article discussed denominational patterns that may well apply also to us in the Lord's church, today. The article said, "Their aim is not a message of salvation, but help, rather than **holiness**."

In recent years, two disturbing tendencies have surfaced. First: **slick professionalism**. Experts are being hired to do the work of the local church because members claim to have no time of their own to become involved. Second: **generational churches** are developing in which the majority ignore believers of other ages and classes. **Churches are becoming social clubs**.

The Newsweek article observed another frightening fact that may apply to too many of us: "**Many preachers/missionaries have simply air-brushed sin out of their language**." Having substituted **therapy for spiritual discernment**, they appeal to *a nurturing God who helps His people cope*. **Heaven, by this creed, is never having to say no to yourself**.

Certainly, we must be more concerned with what we can do for others than with what can be done for us. This does not mean that we should ignore the needs of the local church, but the wonderful paradox of preaching the Gospel, serving others, and planting churches is that our own needs will be provided for in the process. God Himself has promised, "... **Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you**" (Matthew 6:25,26,33).

The Lord's church must not ape the liberal, self-serving denominations. We must be **the voice of truth** in the midst of sin and error. Our service is not to the physical body, the emotions, or the personal ego, but **to the eternal soul**. We are to be the "*pillar and support of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Why are we here? The answer is simple but profound, "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:18,19). †

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Editor's Note:

A "restoration movement" is simply that: restoring in the given locality what was already in existence. The church or body of people for whom Christ died was begun on the Day of Pentecost in AD 33. These articles are an over-view of the American movement to restore that body to the North American continent.

The American Restoration

Dr. Joe D. Gray

The Twentieth Century — First Third

The beginning of the 20th century was in many ways comparable to the start of the 19th century. Fine and honest believers were frustrated and disappointed. Their personal faith was strong, but disillusionment pervaded their lives. Restoration was failing. The unity, which is so solidly taught in the scripture and which had seemed so attainable, was somehow gone. **The majority had betrayed the cause of Biblical unity** and were identified with those who compromised truth. The national census presented a report stating that over 80% of the people in the congregations of the restoration favored using mechanical instruments in worship and/or missionary societies to carry out the task of evangelizing the world.

Those who remained steadfast to **the scriptures — the restoration effort — did not cease their study and prayers**. They did not doubt the validity of their work — the existence of a divine and understandable pattern. They accepted fully the scriptural teachings regarding the singular nature of the church that the Lord established. But they were puzzled and continued to examine everything by the Word — worship, organization, name, Holy Spirit, truth, pastors, etc. They regarded the academic assault on truth as an unwillingness of others to allow the Bible to be their guide.

Again war came to the land; again, individually, the Christians took their stand. But the Kaiser was not their enemy. Many fought in the military battles, but the **progressives — the liberals — were the betrayers**. And these were often the more educated and wealthy. Thus the wisdom of men and love of money came to be considered the major enemies to the discovery, practice, and sharing of the gospel of salvation.

CHURCH HISTORY

The Christians continued to read the Bible. My father spent **hours daily** in the Book. And so did thousands of others. They knew what they believed and were ready to give an answer for their hope to anyone who asked. But few asked, and the saints were not sure of the value of outreach. It had only recently ended in division and disaster.

The country won the war to end all wars and embarked upon a peace that was expected to be permanent. In 1928, the President of the United States proclaimed an “era of prosperity more extensive and of peace more permanent than it had ever before experienced.” At the same time, church attendance declined and many congregations died. **Worldly prosperity reigned in our land and the Lord was forgotten by vast numbers.**

The churches of Christ suffered; their optimism was shaken; their main outreach direction became their own homes. There were many fluctuations in census reports. Much of it was adjustments from errors in the 1906 study. Some statistics changed because congregations that had been singly in one column divided into two groups, which represented the feelings of the members. Some entire churches had been wrongly placed or lost in the census; and many individuals found their way back home.

But the small, poor churches continued meeting and studying. A lesser percentage of the large and prosperous churches held steady to the Word. Faith was instilled in the children who remained faithful in adulthood. The Christians were diligent, able to expound their faith in detail to those who would listen. But few, outside, were interested and the church wondered why. Disillusionment led to the question: “What happened to the success that was expected?” **In the early 20th century, there was an obvious similarity to the conditions and attitudes of the restorers in the early 19th century.**

Twentieth Century — Middle Years

A giant struggle for personal and family survival — economically, physically, and emotionally — afflicted our land in the 1930's. Hunger and joblessness, even despair, were common in virtually every area. The population, so prosperous and arrogant in the '20's, found itself suddenly on its knees. There was nowhere to look but up. Those **starving in body** realized that they were **famished in soul**. And the lost began to **search**. They sought for people who knew God, for those who knew what they believed, for those who lived as He directed and who were not afraid to declare that Way. **The masses, unwittingly, sought the Lord's church.**

CHURCH HISTORY

Buildings of the church, once almost empty, were filled and soon became too small. Literally hanging out the windows, neighbors came to hear the gospel. They appreciated the frankness with which truth was related concerning controversial issues. The lessons were sometimes provocative, but no one could dispute their effectiveness. The visitors studied and responded in large numbers. Gospel meetings, which a decade earlier might have produced a convert or two, suddenly were producing scores of obedient believers. More than 100 were baptized in the meeting in which I became a Christian. By some, this was called “**the golden age**” of the church in modern times.

The confidence of faith, the clarity of message, the urgency of presentation which had seemed so futile in the first part of the century, now **abounded to fruit almost beyond comprehension**. God was truly doing “*exceeding abundantly above*” anything that His children asked or imagined. The problems within the church became minimal in importance. Support of schools, Bible class opposition, communion container(s), were discussed, but the saving of the lost was once more dominant. Pre-millennialism was a serious challenge, but it was faced and quickly defeated. Few wanted to dwell on a problem. There was not enough time; there was too much to do.

In my first full-time work, I found a division in the church which was petty in source, but which ran deep in the emotions of the fellowship. I sought the advice of my father who had been an elder of the church at that time for twenty years. He, in essence, said to me, “Joe, be sure that the disputants know that you love them and that you are anxious to help them. But do not use all your time running back and forth discussing details of a dispute that should not exist in the first place. Remember to work with the youth. Most of all keep teaching the lost. No church argues very long when sinners are walking down the aisle to become Christians.”

His advice proved to be scriptural, effective, and representative of the momentum of the time. The people in dispute soon settled their differences and unprecedented growth followed. **The spiritual hunger produced by the depression restored the church’s confidence in its nature and mission.**

For a third time, war came to our land. Again, Christians accepted their responsibilities as citizens of this great democracy. They knew that Hirohito and Hitler must not be allowed to succeed. But in the midst of the smoke of battle and cries of death, **they found that the world needed Jesus most of all.**

World War II caused the church to recognize God’s vision for all men. The conflict spread Christians all over the world, in a manner similar to the persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8). The young men and women in the military

CHURCH HISTORY

believed that they were to worship regularly, wherever they were. They were **shocked** that so many in the world had no knowledge of the church. They had never traveled before; they had assumed that the church was everywhere, just as it was at home. **Eyes were opened.** The white fields of harvest, referred to by the Lord, suddenly became a reality. **Hearts were touched.** With the confidence of faith and the **vision of the cross**, Christians set out to truly evangelize the world.

The growth of the 40's, 50's and 60's was phenomenal. Gospel meetings produced massive results. When the rush of neighbors to meetings diminished, the Christians took their Bibles, film strips, charts and went searching for the lost neighbors. Conversions increased. The simple, New Testament gospel was taught personally with urgency and clarity. As preachers became more educated and the membership more prosperous, there was increased interest in fact, but no one, at first, dreamed of compromising the message. New edifices in ideal locations replaced small side-street buildings. Staffs were enlarged. Radio teaching became a staple of outreach.

Churches planned extensive mission programs. Some concentrated on areas in the United States; others sent teachers to new lands. New states were entered and many cities heard the message for the first time. The **Gatewoods, Timmermans, Cheshirs** and scores of others carried Truth to many new nations. Thousands of "non-preachers" were involved in campaigns and teams and exodus movements. Youth joined the work in apprentice programs through local churches and then Christian schools. Successful outreach efforts were begun in inner city areas. Training schools and medical missions were established. National radio, television and advertising programs spread the news nationwide. The **Choates, Slates, Grays, Nortons, Paynes, and Scotts** represented a new wave of thousands of missionaries in the '60s and '70s. From 30 or so missionaries in 1931, the number grew thirty-fold in the next 40 years. **The secular media acclaimed the church as the fastest growing religious group in America.**

The mid-20th century could surely be compared favorably in expansion, enthusiasm, and hope with the mid-19th century. Some of us felt that the success would never end. We believed that the church was on course to teach every creature and to bring unity to all believers. †

From: "The Church: Today's Opportunity" by Dr. Joe D. Gray, P.O. Box 156, Altamont, Tennessee, 37301.



How do you measure up?

Enter ye in at the strait gate:

for wide is the gate, and broad is the way,
that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,
which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,
but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;
but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,
neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down,
and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,
shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;
but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day,
Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?
and in thy name have cast out devils?
and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:
depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Jesus Christ

— Matthew 7:13-23

SHARING THE GOSPEL

Greg Tidwell

The word "evangelism" is sometimes misunderstood. To some it may evoke the image of a high-pressure sales technique applied to the goal of convert-making. Granted that there is a sense of advocacy in the Christian mission, evangelism has nothing to do with manipulation.

At times we think of evangelism as something done by a religious professional. While every faithful minister serving the Lord's church sees himself as an evangelist, this important work is not confined to preachers, campus ministers, elders, or deacons. Every faithful Christian is an evangelist.

Misunderstandings of the nature and scope of evangelism disappear when we keep a clear image before us of the concept as presented in Scripture. To be an evangelist means to be a proponent of the Gospel.

The saving work of Jesus Christ is the ultimate reality for Christians. The Gospel provides the framework for our lives, a reason to press forward in the Lord's work, and the peace of mind to face all of life's troubles.

Whenever we consciously act out of our faith in Jesus Christ, we are doing an evangelistic work.

Yes, this involves sharing our faith with outsiders. It means, however, much more than that.

As we bring the Gospel into our lives, we will change in every respect. Christians live out the Gospel as they present themselves as an offering to God. Realizing that in Christ He has given us everything, we must be willing to give ourselves without reservation in His service. †

Greg Tidwell is the preacher for the Fishinger and Kenny Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, USA.

Part-time faith, like a part-time job, will not fully support you.



Hard to Enter

J. Randal Matheny

"Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!'" (Mark 10:23, NET).

He had just left. Saddened by Jesus' command to sell everything. To give his money to the poor. He had great wealth. The problem was, he loved his money.

Probably, the disciples stared unbelieving at Jesus, perplexed that he would let go such a fine specimen of a successful, well-principled man. Perhaps they were waiting for Jesus to call the rich man back and offer to negotiate softer terms.

But Jesus let him go. Because He accepts no one with divided loyalties.

Riches stick fast and hard to the heart. They are removed only by drastic surgery.

If you have a car, a TV, a computer, and more than one pair of shoes, you are wealthy. You are wealthy.

Doesn't matter that you may consider yourself middle class or barely getting by. You are a rich person by this world's standards.

As such, you and I (I'm rich, too) had better take to heart what Jesus says.

Love of wealth grows while we

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

sleep. It stretches its tentacles up our veins while we brush our teeth. It graces our necks with sparking jewels. It polishes our cars with a special wax.

We collect and hoard. Our houses can't hold it all, so we rent space to store our stuff.

We throw out yesterday's treasures to make room for today's latest purchases. The fashion label that cost a fortune now goes in the yard sale for 50 cents.

We entertain ourselves to death and die of boredom.

We waste more food in a day than most of the world eats in a week.

And we assuage guilt by buying more, eating more, consuming more.

We don't need more guilt. We need repentance. A change of heart and habit.

To His disciples Jesus said those words.

After He looked around at them all.

After His gaze seared holes in divided loyalties.

"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" †

J. Randal Matheny is a missionary working in San Jose dos Campos, Brazil. He is founder and editor of the online e-zine at www.forthright.net.

Thank You, Father!

Thank You so much, Father, for the faithful few
Who at every assembly come to worship You.
Those who still long for what made them alive
That divine food and drink by which they survive.
Found only in the Book of books from Your own hand
That freed us from sin and by which we stand.
Please keep them and guide them each and every day
That they stray not from the straight and narrow way.
My prayer to You, Father, is for those who were once true
Who by the world and Satan are no longer strong for You.
Things have taken Your place in the hearts of some
And no longer to the Fount of love and life do they come.
You gave us the choice at the assemblies to be
But how we choose decides life with or without Thee.
Dear God, please strengthen the hearts of the faithful few
That in Heaven their journey will end living with You.

— Everette Bohrer

Does the Bible ever speak of the church together, “at worship”? Some writers have suggested that the New Testament never does so, and that, therefore, we have no right to suggest that there are any guidelines for what might take place in worship. How can we insist that worship should consist of certain

Does the New Testament ever talk about “formal” worship (as opposed to daily, sacrificial living), in which God’s people gather to honor Him and to learn His ways? Is there any indication at all of how we are to act in such a setting?

Well, the truth is that there are many examples. Let’s look at just

Going “To Church”

Stan Mitchell

activities if the New Testament never mentions the church “at worship” in the first place, the reasoning goes? And, after all, they might add, isn’t “all of life worship”?

Paul reminds us that our lives are to be given to Christ as a *“living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship”* (Romans 12:1). There is no question that the child of God must offer Christ more than an hour on Sunday morning. From Samuel to Amos, from Paul to the Lord Himself, the Bible insists that our formal worship must be offered out of a life-style of service to Him. *“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,”* Hosea declares. No amount of attendance at worship and Bible class can make up for a life that is bitter and unmerciful.

But the question still remains.

one context in this regard. In 1 Corinthians 1:1-14, Paul is greatly concerned with the Corinthian church’s behavior “in church”. His concerns are expressed with the phrase “coming together”, which he repeats several times.

“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings (literally, “your coming together”) do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together (the same verb is used) as a church (this is the familiar ekklesia), there are divisions among you...” (1 Corinthians 11:17,18).

Paul’s words tell us that the Corinthian church did come together, but he indicates that the experience was not that for which it was designed. A time when supplicants should have been drawn together in

WORSHIP

honor to God was, instead, an occasion for division. They came together geographically, Paul seems to be saying, but not spiritually. Because of this tragic situation, he devotes several chapters to proper conduct in worship. He begins with the familiar passage on the Lord's Supper, one of those unique things that takes place when God's people come together to worship Him.

"When you come together," Paul begins, *"it is not the Lord's Supper you eat"* (1 Corinthians 11:20). Some might have been forgiven for responding, "It wasn't the Lord's Supper? Didn't we just eat crackers and juice? Then what was it?"

So Paul explains: *"For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else"* (verse 21). We know the passage well. Some were getting drunk. Others

went hungry. The result was pride on the part of some, and humiliation on the part of those left out, the classic results of a church in the throes of division. Paul begins to instruct them on the proper behavior of a church meeting in God's presence, at worship.

The verses that follow turn our attention to sincere unifying behavior at the Lord's Supper. *"So then my brothers,"* Paul concludes, *"when you come together to eat, wait for each other* (he sounds like he's talking to errant children, doesn't he?). *If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment"* (verses 33,34). †

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What Is the Church Worth?

To Christ, it was worth His blood (Acts 20:28).

To God, it was worth His Son (John 3:16).

To Stephen, it was worth his life (Acts 6:7).

To Paul, it was worth his heritage (2 Corinthians 11:22-28).

To Matthew, it was worth his job (Luke 5:27).

To Philip, it was worth his time (Acts 8:26-40).

To James, it was worth his prestige (James 1:1).

To Peter, it was worth his attitudes (2 Peter 1:10,11).

To John, it was worth his concern (3 John 4).

To Jude, it was worth his freedom (Jude 1).

— Author Unknown

How Much Should a Christian Give?

Reuben S. Emperado

Several times, concerned Christians have asked me, how much should a Christian give? Many have considered this subject as a very sensitive issue. In fact, I know of several preachers who confessed to me that they are afraid to preach on giving, for fear of being misunderstood. But giving of our means is a Bible subject, and therefore it needs to be taught to the church and discussed. I think one of the major reasons why many Christians give so little is because they have been taught so little about Biblical giving. I urge you to study this subject with me with an open heart and mind. There are several principles about giving that we have to consider before we delve deeper into this subject.

1. The Israelites were commanded to give ten percent of their income under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 14:22; Malachi 3:10).
2. Christians are under a better covenant with better promises (Hebrews 8:6-13). Are we to give less than what the Jews were giving?
3. Christ has given His life to obtain our salvation (2 Corinthians 8:9).
4. Early Christians were known for their generosity. (Acts 2:44,45; 4:33-37; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
5. God is always pleased with the cheerful and generous givers (2 Corinthians 9:6).
6. Covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).
7. The apostle Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth to excel in giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).
8. We show our love for God when we give (2 Corinthians 8:8,24).
9. Giving is a confession of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 9:13).
10. For a Christian to give generously, he must first give himself to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5).
11. Giving will bless the giver, the church, the lost, and it honors God (Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Philippians 4:17). A generous giver will be richly blessed.

WORSHIP

12. Giving is an act of worship. Paul told the Philippians that their gift to him was *"a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God"* (Philippians 4:18).
13. Remember, God owns everything (Psalm 24:1). When we give to God we are actually giving what is already His. David realized this truth when he said:

"Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given" (1 Chronicles 29:13,14).

Christians are just stewards of God's gifts; this includes our finances (1 Corinthians 4:1,2).

Brother W.A. Holley, in his article, "How Much Should Christians Give?" lists a few Don'ts and Do's about giving. I believe these suggestions are sound and Biblical. Let me share them to you.

Some DON'Ts In Giving:

1. **Don't give sparingly.** All things being equal, if a man sows a small amount of seed, he cannot hope to reap as much as he would from a generous sowing. Is this not true with spiritual sowing, too?
2. **Don't give grudgingly.** Even our greatest gift cannot please God if it proceeds from a reluctant state of mind. Do you feel that what you give is actually lost to you? One day, when my son, Mark, was but a small boy, he watched the brethren take up the contribution, and just as the basket passed him, he said, "Gone, gone". It may be that many brethren in their hearts say, "Gone, gone", as they drop their money into the collection basket. But a Christian knows that the Master will reward him many times over.
3. **Don't give of necessity.** Some give simply because they feel constrained by circumstances that they ought to give; when, as a matter of fact, they would much prefer not to give at all.
4. **Don't give merely to be seen of men.** This is what the Pharisees did (Matthew 7:1-5). In so doing they had already received their reward. And the same is true with us if we follow their example.

Some DO's In Giving

1. **Do give according to your ability** (Acts 11:19). God knows whether you are able to give or not. Your gift is acceptable according to what you have and not according to what you do not have (2 Corinthians 8:1-12).

WORSHIP

2. **Do give as you have been prospered** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). Actually, we save only that which we give to the Lord; all the rest is lost. We can lay up treasure in heaven; but if we do not give, our money will not abound to our account (Matthew 6:19,20; Philippians 4:15-17). It is only right for man, whom the Lord has blessed so wonderfully, to return to Him a portion of these blessings (Malachi 3:8-11)
3. **Do give bountifully and cheerfully** (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). We must not seek to see just how little we can give; rather let us seek ways and means of increasing our contributions, so that our hearts may be enriched and opened to the finer things in life. Jesus teaches that *"freely ye have received, freely give"*. And, *"it is more blessed to give than to receive."*
4. **Do give liberally** (Romans 12:8). Every Christian must be a giver, and he must give liberally. This is the very opposite of the double, closed hand of the stingy. Here is the proof of the sincerity of our love for the truth and for Christ.
5. **Do give as you have purposed in your heart** (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). It is sinful to give by chance, to have no plan, no decision as to how much you intend to contribute. We need to plan, purpose, make a definite decision as to the amount we intend to give, regardless of debts or other responsibilities. We cannot reason that indebtedness provides us a way to escape giving anything. If that were an acceptable way, then let all the members of the church go so deeply into debt until they have nothing left over to give! If one can do it, all can do it, and so the church will fail for lack of funds. Rather, let the kingdom of God be first; never make debts that you rob God of what rightfully belongs to Him.
6. **Do give because it will bring satisfaction of knowing that you are helping in the greatest work on earth: that of promoting Christianity.** Here is a strange paradox: The more you give, the more you will want to give! If you refuse to give, like the priest and Levite, you will soon find that you have lost the wonderful privilege of sharing in dozens of worthy efforts to help suffering humanity. There is a feeling of usefulness, which brings great joy and warm satisfaction to him who gives as the Lord desires.
7. **Do make free-will offering** (Exodus 25:2; 35:21-29). Give because you desire to give and because you love to give. The Master will bless you for it (quoted from **Gospel Light**, June 1967, Pages 86-87). †

Reuben S. Emperado is a Gospel preacher in Cebu City, Philippines.

Please Don't Bury Dreams

An injured heart ... a tired heart ...
It beats ... it slows ... it stops.
There is a stillness ... a total quiet
As a soul returns home.

An injured family ... a tired family,
Aching with unending pain
Holding close for one last time
A body no longer needed by the soul.

Ashes to ashes ... dust to dust.
Can there be nothing left?
Memories ... unfilled dreams ...
Is this all there is to life?

No ... Wait ...
There are so many needs, so many choices.
Please don't bury the dreams and hope
for those still waiting ...

Corneas can grant sight
So a small child can see the sun,
So a father can see his child —
Please don't bury dreams.

Skin can aid in healing,
Can provide time for a burned body —
Time which can mean so much ...
Please don't bury hope.

Bone, the tissue of multiple uses —
Why bury this particle of mankind
That can aid someone else to walk
Or stand straight and tall?

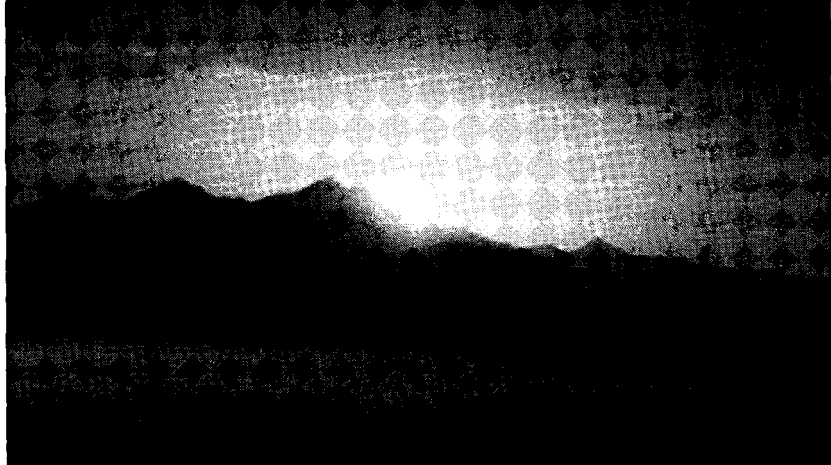
The grave is a final place
For all that's buried there,
But hopes and dreams should soar on high
Made real by those who care ...
Please don't bury dreams.

— Benny Burton Hopper, RN



A Lesson Learned from Watching the Sunset

Ralph Hunter



One evening, after making a hurried trip from Temple, Texas to Dallas and back (something like 8 hours), I needed to take a little walk to stretch my legs. It was just before sundown, and as I walked along the road, I noticed the sun glowing bright and red, just as it passed the curve of the earth. As I walked slowly and watched, I could see the "greater light" (Genesis 1:16) disappear from view, and in just a few minutes it was gone.

As I strolled, my thoughts cen-

tered on how many sunsets there had been in my life, and I had not taken the time to even observe them. In a matter of a few hours I had traveled over 300 miles in a busy schedule, thinking how important my mission was. Then I thought about life and that oft times we use the analogy of the setting sun as we speak of our life ending. A great old poem written by Alfred Tennyson and put to music by Joseph Barnby in 1893 is such a metaphorical example of this.

**Crossing the Bar
Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning
of the bar
When I put out to sea.
But such a tide as moving seems
asleep,
Too full for sound and foam.
When that which drew from
out the boundless deep
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness
of farewell
When I embark...**

Many times we also sing the words penned by Jefferson Hascall in the 1860's:

**My latest sun is sinking fast,
My race is nearly run;
My strongest trials now are past,
My triumph is begun.
I know I'm near the holy ranks
Of friends and kindred dear,
I hear the waves on Jordan's
banks,
The crossing must be near.**

We scurry about with our busy events and missions of life, not taking the leisure to watch our setting sun. How beautiful was the sunset that evening, and how beautiful can be the ending of our life here on earth. How so, you may ask? Look carefully at Revelation 14:13b: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the spirit."

Indeed there is beauty in the sunset because we know that God has made the sunrise to follow. Only we must look in a different direction to see it. We read Solomon's words from Ecclesiastes 1:5: "*The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and he hasteth to his place where he arose.*" So in the setting of our life, we have been promised that there is a "new day", "the sunrise" and it will follow, because God has ordained it (Genesis 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22). We just have to look in a different direction. We must look to that which Paul speaks about in 2 Corinthians 5:1, "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*"

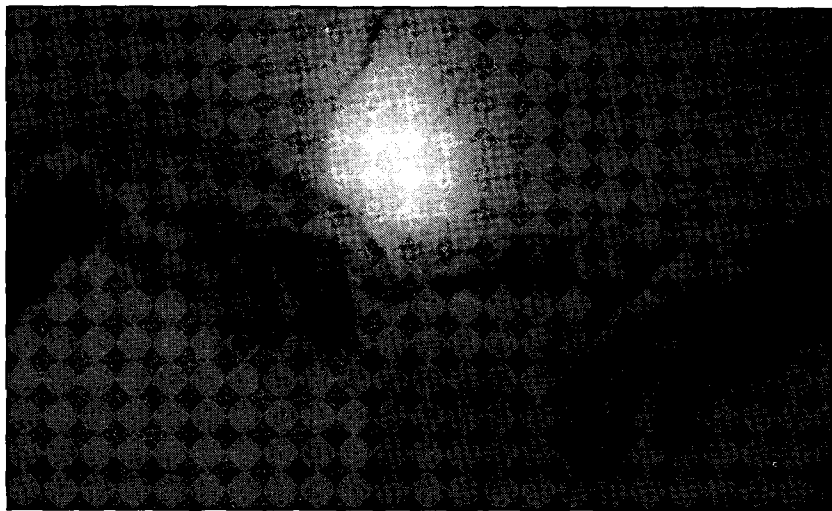
Sometimes we are so busy traveling in a "fast automobile" that we don't take the time to "walk slowly", to get the important things done. We rush about, not seeing the setting of the sun, nor thinking of looking in the direction of the new day.

"Be still, and know that I am God...." (Psalm 46:10). "*for the invisible things of Him ... are clearly seen ..., even His eternal power and divinity*" (Romans 1:20). "*.... stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord ...*" (Exodus 14:13). †

Ralph Hunter is a Gospel preacher living in Owassa, Oklahoma, USA.

God Does, Indeed, Love Us

Darla Rosinski



The New Testament tells us that the Old Testament was given so we can learn from it. There is a theme that runs the length of the Bible but seems very pronounced in the Old Testament — that no matter how dirty or sin-covered a person is, if he wants to come to God, He is ready to welcome them.

In Ezekiel 37, God raises up an army for Israel from a valley of dry bones. The bones represented the House of Israel, steeped in sin, and saying, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” (Ezekiel 37:11). Then God

turns this death and hopelessness into redemption.

“Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,” says the LORD.” (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

These verses bear a very close similarity to a Christian's birth into the family of God. We go into the watery grave of baptism, dead in our sins, only to come out of the grave alive because the Spirit of God now lives in us.

These verses also tell us how we know God is who He says He is — when He takes a dead, dried up body and makes it live again. Physically, life comes from God, and spiritually, we have life because the Spirit of God dwells in us.

God tells us over and over that He's waiting and wanting to help us. How much?

Two phrases come to mind about how much God wants to help us, "... exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or think ..." (Ephesians 3:20) and "... pressed down, shaken together, and running over ..." (Luke 6:38). James 4:8 tells us if we will draw close to God, He will draw close to us. Not only that, Peter tells us that God is not slow in keeping His promises and He doesn't want any of us to perish.

Knowing God doesn't want anybody to perish is so heartwarming! He will punish those who do not repent, but He is there for anyone who wants to be His.

Listen to God's description of His love and compassion for Israel of old:

"As for your nativity, on the day

you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. "And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!'" (Ezekiel 16:4-6).

We see the same compassion in Christ when He wept over Jerusalem:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34).

Today, God's plea is that we hear Him and accept the love and forgiveness He offers:

"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones'" (Isaiah 57:15). †

Darla Rosinski is a Christian wife and mother, living in Augusta, Georgia, USA.



Having 20/20 Vision

J. Robert Swain

I wear glasses, corrective lenses, to repair my poor vision. Without these lenses, my vision is blurry and unclear. Individuals with 20/20 vision have unaided, perfect vision. They see things clearly without distortion.

In our Christian walk, we must have a clear view of what God has done for us and what God expects from us. The apostle Paul knew this quite well. Many times in his preaching and writing he reminded the church never to forget their objective: to proclaim Christ as the living Savior. In Acts chapter twenty, Paul called the men who served

as elders for the church in Ephesus to Miletus where he was waiting. He was on his way to Jerusalem, and he knew that this might be the last time he would ever talk to these men who were so dear to him.

The apostle began his statements in verse 18 by saying, "*You know...*" He reminded them of something he was sure they already knew — how he had conducted himself and had always kept his purpose and objective clear, that is, to make Christ known to everyone in every way.

I want you to remember Acts 20:20 as our **Christian 20/20** vision,

"How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house." Paul's clear vision was to teach everything that would make the people around him closer to God and to teach in every method and opportunity afforded him!

The early church had a clear view of their objective as followers of Christ. Acts, chapter eight, records how the church was persecuted in Jerusalem and was scattered in every direction (verse 4). As they went their way, they taught the good news of the gospel. The reason that they were able to teach was because they themselves were taught, and they studied daily. In Acts 2:42, we are told that the early church was *"...continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine"*. They prepared themselves to teach people, and we must do the same!

We are commanded to be diligent and study to *"present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). If we expect God to approve of us, we must study and be able to use the Bible to teach others.

If we keep Paul's 20/20 vision, there will be no reason to be ashamed of our efforts in God's service!

Peter encourages us in 1 Peter 3:15 to *"... sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."* In humility, we keep our minds focused on the God whom we serve as we prepare ourselves by studying His word. Then, and only then, will we be ready to answer the questions that our friends and family have about our hope in Christ. If we are not prepared, they will not hear, and we should be ashamed!

So, let's not forget the lesson Paul is trying to teach us...keep a 20/20 vision on your objective: be prepared to teach those around you anything that will help them to come to know Jesus Christ, and never let an opportunity, either in public or in private, to talk about your loving God slip through your fingers. Keep your focus! †

J. Robert Swain is a missionary working in Asia and India. He lives and works with the World Evangelism team in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

*Do a deed of simple kindness, though its end you may not see;
It may reach, like widening ripples, down a long eternity.*

— Joseph Norris

IN the World But Not OF the World

Royce Frederick



There was a strange man named Simeon, who lived from A.D. 386 to 459. He lived on top of a column sixty-feet high for thirty-six years. From that position, he preached to people and gave his judgment in cases of dispute. During the third through fifth centuries A.D., many people who wanted to follow Christ lived very strange lives in an effort to escape the temptations and corruptions of the world. Some of them lived in caves, while others went into the deserts to live. Some of them weighted themselves down with chains. Some ate only grass. Some prayed in the rain, wind, and snow without moving. Some endangered themselves before snakes and wild beasts, and a few burned their bodies. They were trying to be "holy" by doing these things.

These strange practices did not come from God. They came from

several false beliefs:

- ❖ the belief that flesh and everything connected with flesh is sinful;
- ❖ the belief that a person who is married is less spiritual than a person who is not married;
- ❖ the belief that a person is suffering for Christ when he tortures himself;
- ❖ and the belief that living such a life and dying such a death was a sure way to heaven.

Christ and His inspired writers never taught such ideas. The disciples of Christ are *"in the world"*, but they are *"not of the world"* (John 17:11,14). Jesus prayed to God the Father, *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are*

not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them (set them apart) by your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:15-17). Although we live in a sinful world, our conduct should be guided by God's Word, not by the things we see and hear in the world around us. God's Word helps keep us away from the evil one. Jesus also prayed, "*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world"* (John 17:18). To be a light which leads people to glorify God (Matthew 5:14-16), the Christian needs to live in a godly, holy manner among people (Titus 2:12).

The Bible often uses the word "flesh" to refer to evil desires which tempt us and find expression through our physical bodies (Romans 8:5-13). And the Bible often uses the term "the world" to mean the evil practices of most people in the world (1 John 2:15,16; see Matthew 7:13,14). But the material world (the earth) and all physical things are not evil in themselves. Christ became a human, with flesh and blood like you and me, yet He never committed any evil or sin (John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15). God created all things through Christ (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Satan never created anything. Sin and evil are actions. Sin occurs when we abuse physical things or have extreme desires for physical things.

Some people have forsaken God's Word by forbidding marriage (1 Timothy 4:1-3). But, the Bible shows us that the marriage relationship was created by God and should be held in honor (Genesis 2:21-25; Matthew 19:4-9; Hebrews 13:4).

We should endure suffering and should sacrifice ourselves for the sake of Christ. But the Bible does not teach us to torment our bodies. When a person torments his own body as a method of religious devotion, it may appear very impressive, but it has no spiritual value: "*These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh"* (Colossians 2:23). Instead, we are taught to endure persecutions and hardships that come upon us from other sources as we stand for the truth and live for Christ (Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Timothy 2:3-6). We should be a "*living sacrifice*" (Romans 12:1). The way we accomplish that is by using our abilities diligently in the work of the Lord's church (Romans 12:4-8), and by living unselfishly and righteously among our fellowmen (Romans 12:9-21). †

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

Accentuating the Positive

Maxie B. Boren



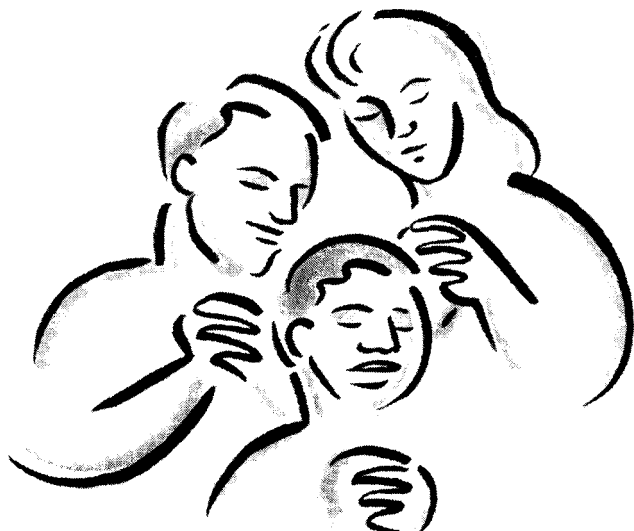
Life will always have its “negatives”. That is just a fact with which we all have to deal. There will be things happen along the way that are disconcerting, discouraging, and disappointing. Jesus taught His disciples, *“In the world you have tribulation...”* (John 16:33). When such occurs, we must cope the best way possible. We are not alone in these times, because the Lord will stand by and strengthen us as He did Paul (2 Timothy 4:17). And in so doing, we take great comfort in the fact that God will not allow us to be tempted (or tried) above what we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Perhaps the best thing we can do when we are tested is to accentuate the positive, not to be anxious over matters, but to pray often and fervently, and to think on good things, just as the apostle instructed (Philippians 4:4-8). By so doing, we can indeed learn to be content

regardless of the circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13). Remember, we have the Almighty God of heaven and earth who loves us and who is well able to sustain us (Ephesians 3:20). He comforts us in our afflictions (2 Corinthians 1:4). We are thus encouraged to cast all our cares upon Him, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

So even though we experience troubling times occasionally, let us keep on the “sunny side” of life and count our blessings. Let us constantly look up to Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). And let us believe with all our hearts that everything is going to work for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28) and that the victory will be ours in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). †

Maxie B. Boren is a preacher of the church of Christ living in Bedford, Texas, USA.



The Prayers of Christians

Don L. Norwood

Let us study Jesus' teaching concerning acceptable prayer in the life of His disciples. In Matthew 6:5-15, Jesus sets forth a model prayer. We need to learn all we can about prayer so that we can pray acceptably to our heavenly Father.

This prayer that Jesus spoke is a model with reference to brevity and scope. As one analyzes the prayer, it shows a well-considered structure of three parts, namely: (1) the address, (2) a group of petitions pertaining to God, and (3) a group of petitions pertaining to the person offering the prayer.

The prayer is brief, but it covers

a wide range of human needs, as well as showing the relationship between God and mankind. It is a model with reference to simplicity and directness. Even those who are uneducated can understand it. Each petition is a request for something distinct and definite. One does not have to use many words or phrases to make a petition to God. We can and must be sincere and direct. Also encompassed in the prayer are acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in heaven and on earth, praise and reverence for God, and concern for His kingdom and for the prevalence of His will.

This prayer is a model in reference to order. Notice that before Jesus mentioned a word about personal needs, He used words to glorify God. He asked that God's name be hallowed and that God's kingdom would come. He further expressed desire that humans would do God's will here on earth, just as it is in heaven (verse 10).

Remember that our prayers should always give God glory, and then we can make mention of our personal needs. We should pray with the conviction that God will answer our prayers if we do our best to learn and do His will, and if we have complete faith in Him (John 9:31; James 1:5-8). God will answer according to what He sees is best (1 John 5:14,15). Remember, doing God's will is the only way any of us can get to heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). We should hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

Jesus' prayer is a model with reference to spirit. In order to properly worship God, it must be done in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24). When one approaches God with a petition, he should do so with complete trust and supplication that comes from a sincere heart, realizing that all good and perfect gifts come from the Father above (James 1:17).

What are conditions for accept-

able prayer to God? (1) The prayer must be offered in complete faith (James 1:5-8; Matthew 21:22); (2) the motive for asking must be right (James 4:3); (3) it must be in accordance with God's will (1 John 5:14,15); (4) the petitioner must be in a right spiritual relationship with God (John 9:31; John 15:7; 1 John 5:14,15); (5) the prayer must be offered in the name of Jesus Christ (John 14:13,14).

Christians must avoid things that hinder God's answers to prayers. Such hindrances would include allowing oneself to continue to practice sin (Psalms 66:18; John 9:31), refusing to learn and obey God's will (Proverbs 28:9; 2 Timothy 4:3), refusing to love and to abide in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12), having a hateful and unloving attitude toward one's mate (1 Peter 3:7), being unwilling to sincerely forgive a person who has offended us and has asked forgiveness (Matthew 6:14,15; Mark 11:25,26), failing to be sensitive to the needs and cries of the poor (Proverbs 21:13; 1 John 3:17), and doubting that God will answer the prayer (James 2:5-8).

Let us all strive to pray as Jesus taught, "*...Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" †

Don L. Norwood makes his home in Palestine, Texas, USA. He is involved in full-time mission efforts for India.

Faith

Love

Obedience

Wayne Barrier

Christians must understand the connection between faith, love, and obedience to live as God wills. We know that *"without **faith** it is impossible to please Him"* (Hebrews 11:6). The first great commandment is to *"**love** the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind"* (Matthew 22:37). The second great commandment is to *"love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:30). Those who fail to **obey** the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ are destined to eternal punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:8). We must do God's will or be rejected by

Him (Matthew 7:21).

These three aspects of being a Christian are connected, even though man often ignores one or two while emphasizing the others in his attempts to please God. Their connection can be understood by considering the message of 1 John 4:20-5:5.

These verses state,

"If anyone says, 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God must love his brother also. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born

of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” John states in 1 John 3:18, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Christianity demands a complete commitment and investment of action. It is easy to say that we have **faith** and that we **love** the Savior without investing in the action demanded by **obedience**. Some find themselves obeying the rules but lack the heart of love and

appreciation of a true Christian.

Personal examination and inventory can reveal our condition with regard to these three dimensions of Christianity. We must not be “*conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*” (Romans 12:2).

Faith, love, and obedience can lead us to the ultimate victory that God offers to man through the sacrifice of His Son — eternal life. †

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA, and is involved in taking the Gospel throughout the world.

Heads Bowed the Lowest

Mike Johnson

A farmer and his son went into the field to check the progress of the wheat crop. The boy looked across the waving grain stalks. He noticed in the field many stalks were bending over while others were standing tall.

“Dad”, he said, “Those stalks that are standing up must be the best of the bunch. They are holding up their heads proudly. They must be the best and are showing how proud they are by their position.”

The father then took his boy out into the field to teach him a lesson. He showed the son that some of the heads standing tall had either small, insignificant grains or none at all. The stalks that were bending over had fine, full heads. The fullest heads were bowed the lowest.

Now, life is like that. Those who are the most humble often are the people with the most to give. It is humility that makes great people really great. The fullest heads should be bowed the lowest. The Bible says that Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the death of the cross. His was the supreme example of humility at work.

Forgiving One Another

Basil Overton

Remember that the Bible teaches many things regarding our relationship to one another, and all it teaches is important. One is preaching an important phase of the Gospel when he preaches what the Lord has revealed about our responsibilities to one another.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31,32).

In teaching God's children to forgive one another, the Holy Spirit in the foregoing passage presented the highest example of forgiveness when He commanded Christians to forgive each other *"even as God also in Christ forgave you."* Jesus taught: *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14,15).*

"And when they came unto the place which is called the Skull, where they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus

said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots" (Luke 23:33,34). "Said" in this text is from a Greek verb that is in the imperfect tense, which is the tense of continuing action in the past. The verse literally means that "Jesus kept on saying, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This may mean that each time an insult or abuse was hurled at Him, He said: *"Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."* Jesus wanted even Caesar's soldiers to be forgiven; He wanted the Jews to be forgiven who instigated His crucifixion. On the Pentecost following His crucifixion, the Holy Spirit announced God's conditions of forgiveness for those who crucified His son (Acts 2:36-38).

Jesus, the innocent one was buffeted, beaten, and betrayed; He was tried, denied, and crucified, and yet His first words on the cross were a prayer to His Father that His offenders be forgiven! His first words on the cross were not a complaint registered against His persecutors; they were not a plea of His own pure and perfect innocence; they were not a cry for vengeance,

but they were a prayer for the forgiveness of those who so brutally abused Him.

It is reported that a Zulu chief beat his wife for accepting Jesus. He left her, thinking she was dead. When he returned and found her alive and asking Jesus for help, he asked her what Jesus could possibly do for her. She replied, "He can help me forgive you."

A child of God may be unstained by immoral sensual practices; he may be regular in worship service; he may be held in high esteem by men; and yet he may have an unforgiving heart! Perhaps one's heart is never heavier than when it is unforgiving. Someone has said: "Forgiveness is the odor of the rose you crush beneath your clumsy feet." Remember, God commands us to forgive each other as He has forgiven us in Christ. †

Basil Overton, the former editor of *The World Evangelist*, is now retired. He lives in Florence, Alabama, USA.

A Tale of Two Friends

A story is told of two friends walking through the desert. At some point in the journey, they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other in the face. The one who was slapped was hurt, but without saying anything he wrote in the sand:

**"Today my best friend
slapped me in the face"**

They kept on walking until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but his friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he carved on a stone:

**"Today my best friend
saved my life."**

His friend asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand, and now, you carve on a stone. Why?"

The other friend replied: "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in the sand, where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away, but when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone, where no wind can ever erase it."

Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your blessings in stone.

— Author Unknown



WHERE THE GREEN BOUGH GROWS

Janet Jenkins
and
Diane Mauk

There is a Chinese proverb stating "If I keep a green bough in my heart, the singing bird will come." This growing and vibrant plant serves as an insurance policy for expected future happiness.

Scriptures teach us that the heart capable of keeping **love** (Deuteronomy 6:5), **obedience** (Romans 6:17) and **merriment** (Proverbs 15:13) is one that is **growth-producing**, while the heart that keeps **deceit** (Obadiah 1:3), **error** (Hebrews 3:10) **defilement** (Matthew 18:30), and **idolatry** (Ezekiel 4:17) is **growth-denying**.

It is true that, because of true beliefs or erroneous beliefs, some hearts function for good while others do not, and the heart incapable of sustaining any "green bough" will not anticipate any improvement in circumstances. For the green bough to flourish, its roots must

have a *source of sustenance* and that sustenance is the living God.

A heart where little cultivation of Godly concerns occurs will find it difficult to raise a crop of faith and hope, for God is the God of hope (Romans 15:4). Only with hope, resting on God, can any heart face the future confidently.

The promise of Titus 1:2, "*... in hope of eternal life which cannot lie, promised before time began ...*" (NKJV) empowers the Christian's heart with anticipation of joyful singing forever. As long as our heart is connected to the true Vine, we will continue to know the joy and hope of the Christian's great expectation for eternal life. Such a heart keeps the green bough alive with assurance. †

Janet Jenkins of Caddo, Oklahoma and Diane Mauk of Durant, Oklahoma, USA are sisters in Christ.

Marriage Is Honorable in All

Francis David

Every day marriages take place, and every day marriages are broken as well. Divorce has become a common problem. Marriage is now considered a very light thing and is not taken seriously. However, the Bible, God's book, says that "*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*" (Hebrews 13:4).

There is no doubt that in every country and every situation, marriage should be considered very honorable. However, if we take out the word "honorable" from marriage, many bad things start sprouting up in relationships: hurtful, sinful things in the eyes of God. Our modern society is filled with illicit relationships. Why is this so? Because marriage is no longer counted as honorable, as it was in times past.

Today, many marriages are unstable and broken. The lives of innocent children are destroyed because of the evil of divorce. Helpless children are reaping the consequences of their father's and mother's mistakes. Everyone touched by the divorce suffers, and the broken lives are filled with

immense problems. Too late, men and women see that they did not take their marriage seriously.

In today's world, divorce is spreading just like HIV. But why does divorce take place? Because society has taken the word "honorable" out of marriage, and the stigma that used to be attached to the very word "divorce" has vanished. The prophet Malachi said it in this way, "*Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou has dealt treacherously: ... Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away [divorce]*" (Malachi 2:13-16).

God hates divorce or the separation of man and woman from each other. God wants the wife to behave rightly with her own husband, and likewise the husband should rightly behave with his own wife. The Bible says, "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel,*" (1 Peter 3:7), and to the wives, the word of God says, "*Likewise ye*

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

wives, be in subjection to your own husbands: that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (1 Peter 3:1). Many times divorce takes place because the husband or the wife is either selfish or haughty and demanding. The Scriptures teach that both parties in a marriage must consider each other (1 Corinthians 7:1-5).

Both the husband and wife should respect and honor each other. If there is any slackness in love, kindness, and trust between them, then there is a serious problem somewhere. On the other hand, if there is a strong trust in each other, then such a thing as divorce will never even be considered as a solution to the ups and downs of marriage.

Jesus said, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6). Today the courts are filled with cases of divorce. God is very unhappy with this. Our God performed the first marriage of Adam and Eve. Both of them were living happily in the Garden of Eden. For Adam, there was only one wife. In other words, God made only one Eve for Adam. The third person should never come into the picture. However, we see today that husbands and wives often develop illicit relationships with another person, often with someone with whom they work on a job. The

practice of women leaving the home, to work alongside men, has broken more marriages than any other single thing.

Therefore, if you want to safeguard your marriage, never allow any third person to come into your relationship. God never made two wives for Adam; neither did He created two husbands for Eve. There should be only one husband for one wife and likewise one wife for one husband, and this relationship should always be intact till death separates them. It is good to hear when people say that their marriage is 30-, 40-, and 50-years old.

The Scriptures teach that the husband is to love his wife enough to die for her: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies*" (Ephesians 5:25,28). And women are to love and respect their husbands (v. 22).

Come! Let's see marriage as honorable. Let us teach our youths that marriage is honorable, and that divorce is a terrible tragedy. Divorce only brings heartaches, misery, pain, and sorrow. Let's respect marriage, and moreover, let us remain faithful to each other till death separates us. †

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What Is a Father?

Lewis G. Hale

Biologically, almost any male may become a father. But, is that what it really means to be a father? Surely not.

The father is the head of his home and has a great responsibility to his family. He is to be the spiritual leader of the home.

One of the basic responsibilities of a father is to provide for his family. *"If any provide not for his own, especially them of his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"* (1 Timothy 5:8). Many fathers in America are not even in the home, and thousands of them are delinquent in their child support payments.

A father should be a role model for his children. Jesus said, *"Ye do the deeds of your father"* (John 8:41). How often have you seen a little boy who tries to walk and talk like his daddy! They are great little imitators. Fathers, be careful where you walk; little feet are following you. Be sure you lead them into righteous paths.

A father owes his children instruction. *"Hear ... the instruction of a father"* (Proverbs 4:1). Israel was told to teach their children while sitting in the house, while

walking in the way, on lying down at night, and when rising up (Deuteronomy 6:7). They were to teach, teach, teach. Fathers, you cannot afford to leave it to the world to teach your children. If you do, they will teach them the wrong things.

Fathers owe their children correction. To fail in this is to treat them as if they were illegitimate (Hebrews 12:7). Eli was high priest of Israel, but God brought his house to an end *"because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"* (1 Samuel 3:13).

Fathers need to share responsibilities with the mothers. *"Jacob obeyed his father and his mother"* (Genesis 28:7). A wise father knows that a good mother understands the needs of children and will seek her counsel, even though the final decision may be his.

Fathers, your children will likely honor you on Father's Day whether you deserve it or not. But, let's be honorable. Be the kind of father that a son would like to become. †

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It's Not Easy to Fool a Child

Dalton Key



We may as well admit it. Our children learn more from what they see in us than from what they hear from us. But then again, actions have always spoken more loudly than words.

This brings to mind the story of a young couple experiencing difficulty in freeing their two-year-old daughter of the thumb-sucking habit. After a frustrating number of failures, the husband finally hit upon an idea. He leaned down, looked into her small, innocent eyes, and asked? "Big girl? Or little girl?" The small one replied, "Big girl!", and out came the thumb.

A few hours later, Daddy reached for a cigarette and was just beginning to light up when his little girl gazed up at him, sternly peered into his eyes, and intoned, "Big

daddy? Or little daddy?"

No, our children are not as naïve as we might suppose. They have an uncanny ability for detecting duplicity and unmasking hypocrisy. It's not easy to fool a child.

Solomon's sage advice to "*train up a child in the way he should go*" requires more than mere words and warnings; it demands a lifetime of living, breathing demonstration (Proverbs 22:6).

Or, in the words of Albert Einstein, a man whose insight obviously transcended the lesser realms of figures and physics, "There are three principles of child-rearing: example, example, and example." †

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PROVERBS 17:22



SOMETIMES KIDS ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO MAKE SENSE!!!

A three-year-old boy went with his dad to see a litter of kittens. On returning home, he breathlessly informed his mother, "There were 2 boy kittens and 2 girl kittens."

"How did you know?" his mother asked.

"Daddy picked them up and looked underneath," he replied. "I think it's printed on the bottom."



Another three-year-old put his shoes on by himself. His mother noticed that the left shoe was on the right foot. She said, "Son, your shoes are on the wrong feet."

He looked up at her with a raised brow and said, "Don't kid me, Mom. They're the only feet I got!"

After the church service a little boy told the preacher, "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money."

"Well, thank you," the preacher replied, "but why?"

"Because my daddy says you're the poorest preacher we've ever had."



A mother and her young son returned from the grocery store and began putting away the groceries. The boy opened the box of animal crackers and spread them all over the table.

"What are you doing?" his mother asked.

"The box says not to eat them if the seal is broken," the boy explained. "I'm looking for the seal."



A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, five, and Ryan, three. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.'"

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus."

PROVERBS 17:22

A father was at the beach with his children when his four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore, where a seagull lay dead in the sand.

"Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked.

"He died and went to Heaven," the dad replied. The boy thought a moment and then said, "Did God throw him back down?"



An acquaintance of mine who is a physician told this story about her then-four-year-old daughter. On the way to preschool, the doctor had left her stethoscope on the car seat, and her little girl picked it up and began playing with it. "Be still, my heart," thought my friend, "my daughter wants to follow in my footsteps!!"

Then the child spoke into the instrument: "Welcome to McDonald's. May I take your order?"

A wife invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?"

"I wouldn't know what to say," the girl replied.

"Just say what you hear Mommy say," the wife answered.

The daughter bowed her head and said, "Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

A father was reading Bible stories to his young son. He read, "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee out of the city, but his wife looked back and was turned to salt."

His son asked, "What happened to the flea?"



THE BATHTUB TEST

It doesn't hurt to take a hard look at yourself from time to time, and this should help get you started. During a visit to the mental asylum, a visitor asked the Director what the criterion was which defined whether or not a patient should be institutionalized.

"Well," said the Director; "we fill up a bathtub, then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," said the visitor. "A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."

Now, which would you use to empty the bathtub? Think hard and answer the question before you read the real answer.

Ready ??

"No," said the Director; "A normal person would pull the plug."

Do you want a bed near the window?"

God Has Made Sure that We Understand Where the Saved Are

Jerry L. Davidson

Introduction:

- A. Knowing where the saved are helps the believer to understand his/her relationship with God.
- B. Various terms in the New Testament show where God's people abide, spiritually.
- C. Observe, then, where God has placed the saved!

I. The Saved Are in the *Church*

- A. The word "church" is used in both a universal and a local sense.
 - 1. When Jesus said, "*I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18), He spoke of the church as being world-wide.
 - 2. When Paul wrote according to Romans 16:16, "*the churches of Christ salute you*", he made reference to individual churches or congregations.
- B. The word "church" translates the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "the called out" assembly.
 - 1. The church is made up of those who are saved (Acts 2:47).
 - 2. The church is the called-out body, redeemed by the blood of Christ (Acts 10:28).

II. The Saved Are in the *Kingdom*

- A. "The kingdom" is the domain over which Christ reigns as "King" (Luke 1:31-33).
- B. The saved are "*delivered ... from the power of darkness and conveyed ... into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Colossians 1:13).
- C. Where Christ reigns in the Christian's life, there is strength to overcome the power of sin (Romans 6:13-16).
- D. Submitting to the reign of Christ, we break with the rule of self and sin.

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

- E. The saved are thus in the kingdom of Christ.

III. The Saved Are in the *House of God*

- A. The house of God is "*the church of the living God*" (1 Timothy 3:14,15).
- B. Paul speaks of the church as being "*a great house*" (2 Timothy 2:20,21).
 - 1. In this house there are "*vessels of gold and silver*" which represent devout Christians.
 - 2. There are also "*vessels ... of wood and clay*" which depict dishonorable members of the church (See verse 21).
- C. God's house is a place of beauty, purity, and service.

IV. The Saved Are in the *Body of Christ*

- A. The church is the body of Christ, and the saved are in the body. (See Colossians 12:18,24; Ephesians 5:23).
- B. Baptism puts one "*into one body*" (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- C. This spiritual body must be a unified and functional body (1 Corinthians 12:24-27).

Conclusion:

- A. The church is also described as a sheepfold, a vineyard, a net, etc.
- B. But with the descriptions which have been noted, we can surely see that the saved are:
 - 1. In the church
 - 2. In the kingdom
 - 3. In the house of God
 - 4. In the body of Christ
- C. Using these terms and others, God has made sure that we understand where the saved are.



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The true saint delights to spend himself
for God's interests in other people, and
does not care what it costs.

Satan's War

Walekeni Moster L. Nyrienda



“And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him” (Revelation 12:7).

Introduction: The war is between God and Satan with his angels. Satan started warring against God in Heaven (Revelation 12:7-9,12). Although Satan lost, he continues fighting until now (1 Peter 5:8).

God's Weapons in This War:

1. The word of God (John 6:63)
2. Faith and all others (Ephesians 6:10-18)
3. Prayer (Luke 22:40,46)
4. Resistance (James 4:7,8)

Satan's Weapons:

The main tool is deception, targeting the key, man (Galatians 1:13,14; Saul was used to destroy the church)

- Satan deceived Adam (Genesis 3:18,19)
- He deceived people of Noah's day (Genesis 6:1-7)
- Satan deceived Judas Iscariot (John 18:2-5)

Satan's Attempt to Destroy the Head — Jesus

In his war against God, Satan wanted to destroy the plan of salvation by killing Jesus on the cross. Indeed, Jesus Christ died. However, God countermanded the devil's plan by raising Jesus from the dead. His death, there-

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

fore became the way of salvation. Satan ultimately loses the war (Revelation 17:14).

Satan's Attempt to Destroy the Body — the Church

Satan used the key figures to destroy the Body of Jesus — the Church:

1. He used the Pharisees to provoke commotions, killing Stephen (Acts 7:59, 8:2)
2. He used Saul to cause havoc to derail the plan (Acts 8:3,4)
3. He used the council to threaten, imprison, and kill the Christians (Acts 4:14-18)
4. He used Herod to kill James, imprison Peter (Acts 12:1-3)
5. Satan used Saul, a devout Jew, to destroy the church (Galatians 1:13,14; Acts 9:1)

Satan's Present Attempt to Destroy the Church of Christ

In his continuing war against God, Satan is very busy making plans and walking around the world looking for someone to deceive and to use as a weapon of destruction (1 Peter 5:8). He has in this 21st century formed his Satanic worship and work, which is opposite to God's plan of salvation (Revelation 2:9; 1 Timothy 4:1,2; 2 Timothy 4:3,4).

God's Appeal

God is appealing to every church leader to be vigilant against ravaging wolves (Acts 20:28). Watch! (Hebrews 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:5). Satan may try to use you or me to destroy the Lord's church in his war against our living God. Resist him (1 Peter 5:9), and draw near to God (James 4:7,8). Amen.

Satan Continues the War

As Satan continues to war against God (1 Peter 5:8), he targets key men to use as weapons to derail the salvation which is found in the spiritual House of God, the church.

A. Satan may use:

1. A group of people as in Noah's day (Genesis 6:1-7)
2. Pharisees, Sadducees and the Scribes, during the crucifixion of Jesus
3. Pharisees at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:59)
4. In John's day, a weak and worldly element in the Church was used (Revelation 2-3)

Satan will use denominational churches to confuse people, so that they will not recognize the true church. Sometimes a group of people even in the

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

Lord's church will allow themselves to be used to thwart God's plan of salvation. Anyone who is teaching spiritual error, even though he calls himself "Christian", becomes a tool of Satan. Think! Does the devil use your congregation or a group of people in your congregation as a tool to fight against God? If the answer is yes, repent and turn to the Scriptures in obedience to God.

B. Satan also uses individuals as weapons against God:

1. He used Saul to persecute the Church (Acts 9:1,2)
2. He deceived Hymenaeus and Philetus to leave the work of God (2 Timothy 2:16-18), destroying faith.
3. Satan also deceived Phygellus and Hermogenes in 2 Timothy 1:15 to desert the centerpiece of Truth.
4. Some may be led to love the world as Jannes, Jambre and Alexander did (2 Timothy 3:8; 4:14)

Conclusion: My beloved brethren, Satan is very crafty and can use you or me to harass or destroy the Church by sowing discord in the field of God. (Read 1 Corinthians 1:10,11; Proverbs 6:16-19). He has his workers in this world, whom he sends to deceive people: *"... such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works"* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Anybody — or I — may be one of his angels if we leave the truth of the word of God.

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; ... And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. ... Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:9,12).

Though Satan does not rest or stop for a second in his work against the living God, he will **not** win. He is fighting a losing war. The Lamb and those with Him shall always win (Revelation 17:14; Romans 8:31,37).

Brethren, let us be vigilant and steadfast in faith, for we are more than conquerors through Christ. †

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BIBLE FIND

ANDREW
BARTHOLOMEW
JAMES
JOHN
JUDAS

MATTHEW
MATTHIAS
PAUL
PETER
PHILIP

SIMON
THADDAEUS
THOMAS

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

"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matthew 10:2-4).

"And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he (Saul, later called Paul) is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel'" (Acts 9:15).

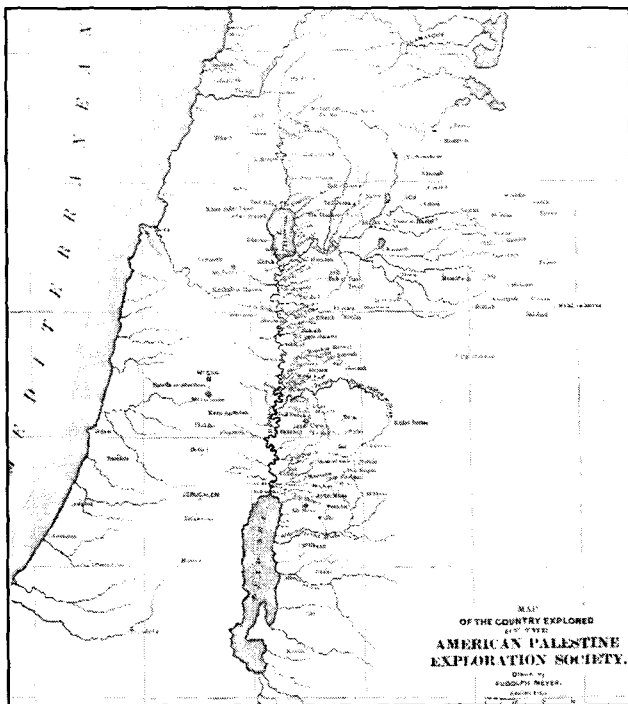
Lessons From a River

Betty Tucker

The Jordan River is the largest river in Palestine. It winds its crooked path for 100 miles. It was of importance in the lives of many Bible characters.

Moses led God's people through the wilderness to the borders of the Promised Land. Though he could not go in, he was allowed to look across the Jordan to see its beauty before he died.

Joshua led the people after Moses' death. The Jordan lay between them and Canaan. When the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the water, it parted, and the people walked across the Jordan on dry land (Joshua 3).



Elijah was about to be taken to heaven in a whirlwind! He and Elisha had to cross the Jordan River. Elijah smote the waters with his cloak, the waters parted, and they walked across on dry land.

After Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire, Elisha needed to cross the Jordan again. He took Elijah's cloak that he had left him,

BIBLE CHARACTERS

struck the waters with it as Elijah had done, and the waters parted once more (2 Kings 2:1-18).

Naaman was a captain in the army of Syria. He had leprosy, a dreaded disease, which greatly hindered him in his duties. A young Israelite girl who had been taken captive lived in his home. She told his wife that a prophet in Israel could heal his leprosy. Naaman went to Israel to see Elisha. The prophet sent his servant to tell Naaman to go and dip in the River Jordan seven times, and he would be cleansed of his leprosy. Naaman was angry, because he had expected the prophet to do some great thing to heal him, but Elisha did not even come out to see him! Besides, the rivers of Syria were cleaner than the Jordan, Naaman reasoned.

At last, Naaman went to the Jordan and dipped once, twice...six times, and the leprosy still clung to him. When he dipped the seventh time, his skin was once again clean, and there was no leprosy. How happy Naaman was, because he had obeyed the prophet's instructions (2 Kings 5).

John the Baptist was preaching near the Jordan River, telling the people to repent of their sins and be baptized. Jesus came to be baptized of John, to "*fulfill all righteousness*". When Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit of God came in

the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3).

Lessons We Learn:

1. Joshua was obedient to God's will. When the priests obeyed his orders to step into the Jordan, the river parted to make a dry path into the Promised Land for those weary people.
2. Elijah and Elisha were obedient servants of God. They were able to miraculously part the waters of the Jordan because of their obedience.
3. Naaman would have lived all of his life a victim of leprosy had he not obeyed the "ridiculous" command to dip in the Jordan seven times.
4. Jesus is the perfect example of obedience. When He was baptized, all who were present realized that this truly was God's Son.

From these great Bible personalities we learn that if we are to be pleasing to God in our lives today, *we must be obedient*. We must read His Word, learn what He would have us do, and incorporate those teachings into our lives. Only then can we reach heaven! †

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Paul's Revealing Faith

Jack W. Carter

The apostle Paul is often thought of as strict, no nonsense, and perhaps even lacking warmth in his relationship with others. A careful reading of his writings reveals that none of this was true.

Paul continually manifested compassion, patient tolerance for the weak, and genuine interest in the well being of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

I wonder if any person ever prayed more for others than did Paul? I wonder if anyone ever demonstrated his interest in others through specific actions more than Paul did?

I like the way he expressed his concern for the church in Thessalonica. He had not visited them for such a long time, and their well being was so much on his mind that he wrote, "*So when we could stand it no longer...we sent Timothy*" (1 Thessalonians 3:1).

But one of the most revealing statements of Paul can be found in his epistle to the church in Rome. It is easy to see in his salutation that he had lived with a genuine longing to be with his brethren in Rome. His primary reason for such a desire is probably expressed in his state-

ment that he wanted "... *to impart some spiritual gift*" (Romans 1:11). But the revealing part that provides a better glimpse of Paul is what he said next. Notice the entire context: "*I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to make you strong*" (now here is the part I appreciate so much) "... *that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith*" (Romans 1:11,12).

Why should Paul have thought for a moment that the faith of another person could be encouraging to him? Wasn't he the epitome of faith? Did he really need others? Wasn't he self-sustaining in all aspects of his Christianity? The answer to every question must be — absolutely not! Paul needed his brothers and sisters, and as strong as his faith was, it was enhanced by the faith of others. The same is true of every child of God who journeys on this earth. We need the faith of one another as a source of encouragement. The next time you think that your presence doesn't count for anything, you might give this some consideration. †

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SAINTS IN UNSEEMLY PLACES

Bill Dillon

Paul closed his Philippian letter from Rome by saying, "*All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household*" (Philippians 4:22). Christians in the imperial family! We can easily imagine what the family life of a debased Nero was like. The immorality of Nero's world was worse than the ungodliness of our own time. If it was possible to be a saint in ancient Rome then it's possible to be a saint in modern-day America.

God's people in times past lived godly lives in the midst of unbelievably corrupt environments. In the days prior to the great deluge, Enoch maintained a level of holiness such that he "*walked with God*" (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). The world of Enoch was so degraded that a sin-hating Jehovah eventually decreed its destruction. But in a world of almost universal moral darkness, Enoch's bright light of goodness shone clearly.



In spite of all the evil forces arrayed for his undoing, Noah lived true to God and *managed the salvation of his family* (Genesis 6-9).

Down through the years, courageous men and women, living in depraved conditions, have shown that it is possible to be ***in the world*** but not ***of the world***. The one who did this best of all was Christ.

The life of one who lives in imitation of Him will be as a current of fresh air in a sin-stenched atmosphere. Let the Lord's people everywhere live as bright and shining lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). †

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TOLERANCE

Cecil May, Jr.

The old-fashioned virtue called tolerance has almost disappeared. The Biblical words for this virtue were forbearance and longsuffering. It cannot be exercised except in reaction to something that is wrong, or at least irritating, and that point matters.

What is demanded by modern culture and called tolerance is a morally apathetic state in which nothing is wrong, nothing matters.

Jesus was tolerant, in the Biblical sense, of the woman exposed in the act of adultery, but not because adultery did not matter. Jesus called it sin, which today would be thought the epitome of intolerance. He was tolerant of a poor woman who was being unwittingly and unwillingly used as a pawn by hypocritical religious leaders to get something with which to accuse Jesus. *"Neither do I condemn you,"* He said. He was not tolerant at all of adultery. *"Go and sin no more,"* He told her (John 8:11).

Homosexual activists accuse Christians of intolerance precisely because we label homosexual acts as sin. They do not seek tolerance; they seek approval. Tolerance is not required in our attitudes toward those who are practicing approved conduct.

We ought to exercise tolerance toward homosexuals. We should not taunt them, mistreat them, harbor hatred toward them, or call them ugly names. It would be nice if they would return the favor, but even when then do not, when we are reviled, we are not to revile in turn.

The practice of homosexuality, however, is sin. The Bible calls it *porneia*, "fornication", "sexual immorality" (Jude 7). The same word is applied to sex between unmarried heterosexuals, adulterous affairs, and divorce for any cause. Those who believe in Christ, and who therefore accept the life-style and conduct to which He calls us, cannot pronounce evil to be good. We have no right to declare as righteous conduct what God has decreed to be lawless.

Tolerance recognizes that behavior may be wrong without being criminal. We do not have the right, personally, to use force against those who engage in legal, but immoral, conduct. Even if the conduct is illegal, the prerogative of enforcement is not ours but the government's. We tolerate religious error because we recognize that imprisoning people, putting them on

ETHICS

the rack, or burning them at the stake are not the ways to persuade them to change their minds.

Tolerance is also exercised when love is shown to the sinner, as Christ loved us and died for us while we were sinners. When truth is lovingly taught to a sinner to rescue him or her from sin; when confidence is shown toward those involved in sinful conduct, that they will turn from it; and especially when contriteness

and sorrow for our own sins is demonstrated even as we seek to restore others, the Biblical virtue of tolerance is exercised.

Christians are to be **tolerant** toward sinners. Christians are not to **give approval** to sin. There is a great difference †

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Five Finger Prayer

- 1. Your thumb is nearest you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember.**
- 2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction.**
- 3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion.**
- 4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night.**
- 5. And lastly comes our little finger, the smallest finger of all, which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you". Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively. Courtesy; "Moma Teacher"**



History of the Eglises du Christ in France

**Compiled by J. Robert Swain
from information provided by...**

Yann Ospitch, Charles White, Mac Lynn, Bren White

The quest for the restoration of true Christianity has always been a struggle for the European continent. In 1878, the former Catholic priest Jules de Launay established a congregation of the church of Christ in Paris, France. He also published a magazine for several years. His *La Verite* can be found at the French National Archives in Paris.

Churches of Christ in the United States began mission work in France through military personnel who remained in Europe after the end of World War II. In 1945, a military man named Max Watson and others began meeting in Paris. Those early Christians usually met on their military bases but did their best to reach out to the French-speaking people. Language was a difficult problem since most Americans did not speak French and most French did not speak English. However, with patience, French-speaking men and women were taught the Gospel and were baptized during those early years. Towards the end of the 1950's there were small congregations of the churches of Christ (with combined membership of American military personnel and French nationals) meeting in about twenty French cities and towns. The U.S. military bases were closed down at the end of the 1950's, ending the era of the American military missionary in France.

Some of the earliest American missionaries who came specifically to France to evangelize were the Melvin Andersons (1949), Maurice and Marie Hall (1949), Leo and Don Hinsley and their wives, the S.F. Timmermans, J. Lee Roberts, A. B. Clappitt and Owen Aikens. A church building was purchased in Paris during those early years and is currently the largest of the French congregations, with 110 members. It is located at 4, rue Deodat de Severac, Paris.

During the 1960's new workers came to France, while the first missionaries gradually returned home. Christians were meeting in Reims through the efforts of the Jerrel Rowden family who also started a printing ministry

FROM THE HEART OF . . .



Eglise du Christ at 4, rue
Deodat de Severac, Paris.

for the French-speaking world at large. This ministry was to be carried on by the Rowdens when they moved to Quebec, Canada. Today, the French World Outreach printing ministry is located at the Cedar Hill Church of Christ, Cedar Hill, Texas, and is still an important part of the French work.

In the sixties, French nationals Richard Andrewjeski, Jena-Marie

Frerot and Jacques Marchal were involved in evangelistic outreach on Radio Luxembourg. There were no local radio stations in France that were available for evangelistic efforts, but Radio Luxembourg reached most of Western Europe. Many interested people contacted these radio speakers, but the inability to do follow-up made the work difficult. These early French radio lessons are still available through Jerrel Rowden in Cedar Hill, Texas.

The church in Lyon began in 1975 through the efforts of Arlin Hendrix and Max Dauner. Charles and Pam White started their work in Lyon in 1987. The church currently has 40 members. For further information concerning the work in Lyon, please read the following article in this issue by Brother Arlin Hendrix. Other cities that have established, organized churches are: Lille with 40 members, Marseilles with 50 members, Strasbourg with 15 members, and a second congregation at Moulin-Vert in Paris with 30 members. The cities of Dijon, Grenoble, Montpellier, Nantes, and Toulouse have only one family worshipping in each city. Preparations are being made to start new congregations in the cities of Metz, Colmar, and Mulhouse in eastern France.

Many other individuals and families have worked in France since those early days. Although this is not an exhaustive list, it should give the reader a good idea of the number of people who committed months or years to the cause of Christ in France. Don and Colette Daugherty, Melvin Anderson, Dale and Imogene McAnulty, Floyd Davis, Bob Grigg, Douglas Marsh, Mathurin LeCardinal, Max Dauner, Yann Opstich, Robert McCready, Jim Griffith, Craig Wolf, Buddy Jones, Glenn Dupont, Roland and Rose Moshen, Bill Burchett, Craig Young, Garth Hutchinson. Arlin Hendrix, Charles Otis White, Joy Laurence, Mike Mason, Serge Rossi, Shelia



Charles and Pam White with the church in Lyon, France.

Matheny, Bren White, Jeff Wilson, Winfred Wright, Russ Albright, Debbie Bargo, Sherry Bennett, Pennie Dacus, Gail Faver, Kelly Fletcher, Jason and Natalie Freed, Daniel and Tammy Frerot, Lawrence Goodwin, Robert Limb, Ron Ice, Cindy Iverson and James Jones.

Evangelistic work in France is difficult at best. Ninety percent of the French population view themselves as Catholic. On the whole, the French culture is skeptical of any organized religion, especially if its proponents come from the United States. New religious efforts are considered cults. Although the French government does not see the church of Christ as a cult and its anti-cult laws do not apply to us, many still see the church in that false light, which intensifies their suspicions.

The churches in France have a yearly retreat in May at a church-owned campsite in the Ardeche area of France. Usually over 150 people attend this gathering.

A mission outreach entitled Operation French World connects mission interns with French-speaking missionaries in the field. More information on this internship is available through Bren White at the internet address: ofwmissions@adelphia.net.

There are several publications in French, including the following:

- Bible correspondence courses called "l'Ecole du Maitre" developed by Doyle Kee in French-speaking Geneva, Switzerland. This material has been useful in training French-speaking preachers.

- The bi-monthly newsletter "French World Missions" published in

FROM THE HEART OF. . .

French and English by the College Church of Christ in Searcy, Arkansas.

- A book entitled **Appelles a etre Saints (Called to be Saints)** by Yann Opstich and Max Dauner.

- **L'Eglise de la Bible (The Church of the Bible), Le Culte Du Nouveau Testament (New Testament Worship), L'Evangile De Christ (The Gospel of Christ)** all by J.C. Choate and **Vous Pouvez Etre Simplement Un Chretien (You Can Be Just a Christian)** by Jim Massey can be obtained through World Evangelism, literature@worldangelism.org.

Other materials can be obtained through the French World Outreach printing ministry at Cedar Hill church of Christ, Cedar Hill, Texas, www.Frenchworldoutreach.org

For an in-depth report on mission efforts on the French speaking countries around the world please see Volume 5 of ***The Voice of Truth International***. Copies of this volume can be obtained through World Evangelism, literature@worldangelism.org.



Saturday night Bible study at the Mohsens' home in Paris, France.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

A French Missionary Speaks Candidly

Arlin Hendrix

Knowing that God has promised to give the increase if one preaches (1 Corinthians 1:17; 3:6), we have made it our goal to preach the Word and to do it in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2).

Our field for the past 31 years has been Lyon, France. Over the years, we have taught hundreds of people of all nationalities and have given the opportunity to thousands more. A good number have been converted and are attending and working with other congregations elsewhere. Hence, the influence of the Lyon work reaches beyond the borders of France and the continent of Europe into Africa and the Caribbean.

There are now Christians, converted and/or trained in Lyon, who have gone to teach on the French-speaking island of Guadeloupe, Reunion Island, and in French-speaking West Africa and in South Africa. Most recently, members from the Lyon congregation began sponsoring several orphans under the care of the Madagascar church of Christ.



Arlin and Pamela Hendrix

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

On numerous occasions we have been blessed to work with other congregations in French-speaking Europe, either helping establish them or helping them grow. Most recently, we have presented marriage seminars in Geneva, Switzerland, Paris, Lille and Guadeloupe, France and Mauritius Island. In French-speaking areas beyond Europe, I have made over 20 teaching trips to the island of Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean, one teaching trip to the preacher school in Cotonou, Benin, and one to the preacher school in Bouake, Ivory Coast. Both Pamela and I have been to Burkina Faso.

The work in Lyon, as is the case in most European countries, is slow for various reasons: tradition, culture, ignorance, and materialism. It takes time to convert a *Frenchman* because one must first gain his confidence and then teach him from scratch, as he has probably never read a Bible. So often, he feels he has been duped either by religion or philosophy or politics or a combination of those, so he is wary of any "new teaching".

People sometimes ask, "But do you feel your time in Lyon has been wasted, since there are so few members?" My response is, "Not at all."

We came to Lyon, according to Paul's words, to preach Jesus Christ. In that respect, the response has always been 100%. Everyone we have taught has responded — either "yes" or "no". We know that it is not our task to give the increase: that is God's and His alone. We do our part by teaching and preaching, trusting in Him, and He does His part.

We would certainly like to see more positive responses here in France. However, God has blessed us by letting us see additional fruit of our labors, through the influence of the Lyon work, in other fields of the world: places we might never have been able to reach without the work in Lyon. For that great blessing and encouragement, we are thankful and we praise God!

God willing, ours is a long-term, perhaps life-time commitment to the work in France and the French-speaking world. Our goal, to our dying day, wherever we are, will be to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

We don't know the total number of people whose lives have been touched by the Gospel because brethren had the faith to send us to France. The apostle Paul wrote, "*How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*" (Romans 10:14).

Pray with us for a spiritual awakening in France. Pray that a door may be opened for the Word of God, that God's servants may proclaim the message with assurance, and that the Gospel may increase and bear fruit. †

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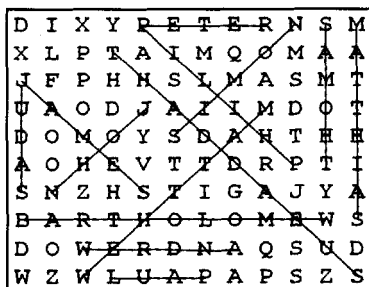
ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from page 24)

1. Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.
2. Yes!
3. God can be seen in the things that He created.
4. Their thinking became futile, their hearts were darkened, they became foolish in God's sight.
5. Made idols to resemble man, birds, and animals. They worshiped the creature instead of the creator.
6. God allowed man to pursue a life of uncleanness, of lust, of dishonor, of vile passions, and a debased mind.
7. That man could live without the one and only God.
8. It is unnatural, lustful, shameful, and is a terrible error.
9. There are no differences.
10. Yes.
11. It would justify their own actions in their eyes.

Bible Find

(from page 97)

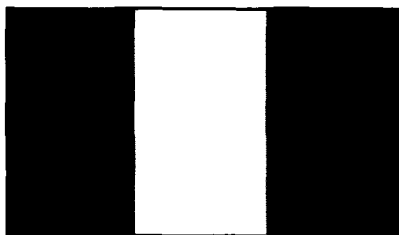


FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



French Republic

1958



President: Jacques Chirac
Prime Minister: Dominique de Villepin

Secular Facts:

Location: Western Europe.

Land Mass: 210,669 square miles

Population: 60,424,213

Major Cities

Paris (capital), Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nice, Strasbourg.

Language:

French (Official); minorities speak Breton, Alsatian, German, Flemish, Italian, Basque.

Education:

99% Literacy

Compulsory education: 10 years

Religion:

Predominantly Roman Catholic

Ethnic Groups:

93% French, a mixture of various European and Mediterranean groups.

Economy: Industrial nation, with steel, chemicals, textiles, and wine. Resources of minerals, crude oil reserves and forests. Labor force: services 71.5%, industry 24.4%, agriculture 4.1%

Monetary Units: Euro (EUR)

The Church:

Congregations: There are seven organized congregations in French cities: Paris (2), Reims, Lyon, Lille, Marseilles and Strasbourg. Five other cities; Dijon, Grenoble, Montpellier, Nantes, and Toulouse have only one family worshipping, with no organized outreach efforts.

History: Mission work for the church of Christ in this century began with U.S. military men shortly after World War II. One such man, Max Watson, is credited with the first meetings in Paris in 1945. In 1949, Maurice and Marie Hall, with Melvin and Iva Anderson, were the first missionaries to specifically come to France to share the Gospel on a full-time basis..

Current Works: An annual nationwide retreat is conducted by the churches in France. There are plans for establishing congregations in the eastern French cities of Metz, Colmar, and Mulhouse.