

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

VOLUME FIFTY-THREE

gden Church of Christ

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THE SOJOURNERS

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

STAFF:

Editor-in-Chief: J.C. Choate
Managing Editor: Byron Nichols
Layout Editors: Betty Burton Choate
Barbara A. Oliver
Michal Swain
Typesetting: Gay Nichols
Eulene Ramsey
Art Consultant: J. Robert Swain
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate

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SPANISH EDITION:

Managing Editor: J. Robert Swain

TELUGU EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translator: Joshua Gootam

TAMIL EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translator: P.R. Swamy

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STAFF WRITERS:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
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J.C. Choate (editor) P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967, USA; Phone: 662-283-1192; Fax: 1-419-791-0505; E-mail address: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org.

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for Self,
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

You may be like Jack Horner and chisel a plum
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear to the end,
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years,
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

— Peter "Dale" Wimbrow, Sr.

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

☆ **When and where was the first congregation of churches of Christ begun?** (Isalah 2:2,3; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4; Mark 9:1.)

☆ **What or who is its founder and foundation?** *Christ.* (Isalah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:18.)

☆ **By what name is the church called?** (Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:15.)

☆ **What are its members called?** (Acts 9:13,14; 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.)

☆ **How is one forgiven, to become a part of Christ's church (family)?** *Faith, repentance, baptism into Christ.* (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3,4; Hebrews 5:8,9; Acts 8:27-40.)

☆ **How is it organized?** (Ephesians 1:22,23; Phillipians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-12.)

☆ **How does it worship?** *In spirit and in truth.* (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2.)



HUMANISM AT WORK

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

The Bible clearly teaches that God created the universe, the earth, and all that exists. It tells us of the creation of all living things, crowned with the creation of man and woman (Genesis 1,2).

If the written account of creation is not convincing enough that there is a God, we need only look at our marvelously designed bodies, consider our minds, raise our eyes to see the details of any particular thing that exists, and if we are honest we will be forced to admit that only a Supreme Intelligence could bring these intricate things into existence. How can an intelligent, thinking being come to any other conclusion?

With all the information available to us today, for anyone to reject divine creation there must be a deep-seated *desire* to deny the existence of God. The sad thing is that those who deny God also want to force their beliefs — or *lack* of belief, in this case — on everyone else. Often, this is done through the instruments of *withholding information* and *ridiculing those who would disagree*: those who believe in God are portrayed as being ignorant and blind to modern science.

In the mid-thirties, “Humanists” formed themselves into a religious society with a manifesto. Here are some of the major points from that first document:

“**FIRST:** Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. [**The promotion of atheism.**]

“**SECOND:** Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process. [**Promotion of the belief of Evolution.**]

“**THIRD:** Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected [**Denial of the soul**].

“**NINTH:** In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a height-

ened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being. **[But when there is tragedy or disaster, do you ever hear of atheistic and humanistic organizations rushing in to help the devastated? Watch for them — they're never there. All of their effort and money are spent promoting humanism and atheism.]**

“TENTH: It follows that *there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes* of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

“ELEVENTH: Man will learn to *face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge* of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. Certainly *religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows*, in order to function effectively in the modern world **[Every-thing pertaining to God and religion is being removed from the public eye, except when held up for ridicule.]**

“FOURTEENTH: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing *acquisitive and profit-motivated society* has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A *socialized and cooperative economic order* must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. *The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good.* Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.”**[The replacement of individual effort and its rewards with an enforced system of socialism.]** (Quoted from The Humanist Manifesto I, 1933; Italics and added statements in brackets, mine. JCC)

In the seven decades since its beginning, Humanism has worked cunningly and deceitfully, gradually taking over our educational system, most of the media, and much of the entertainment world with its world-wide influence; and its effects can be seen in every walk of life.

In our schools, only Evolution can be taught today. There can be no prayer, no mention of God. Nothing of a religious nature is allowed — except the tenets of the religion of Humanism. As a result, our children grow up hearing only the fabrication of the creative abilities of mindless evolution. Their faith is further attacked in colleges and universities, with professors deriding any who would defend the Bible and the idea of God.

But the classroom is not the end of the battlefield. Children and young

people are daily exposed to materials on the Discovery Channel, The History Channel, National Geographic, etc., that promote the teachings of Evolution. Statements are made as **truth** and **fact**, not to be questioned. Programs are shown that are often total fabrications of pre-historic animals and people, living — as they say — millions of years ago, and they describe details of their lives and behavior that are absolute fairy stories, but presented as fact. So of course, nothing in the presentation is to be questioned.

These and other channels often advertise some program with an intriguing name or religious question, suggesting that information will be presented that will be supportive of the Bible as God's word. "Mysteries of the Bible", "The Gospel of Judas", "The Da Vinci Code" and many other such programs have been aired. But, almost without fail, the end goal is to undermine the faith of the viewers.

And, almost without fail also, when anyone representing "Christianity" is shown in a TV series, he/she is portrayed as a bumbling idiot, or a hypocrite, or an immoral and evil person.

Anti-Christian lawsuits are continually coming up in court and, 99% of the time, the liberal judge sides in favor of the atheist who brought the suit. Everyone today seems to have the "right" to voice and practice whatever he pleases, except those who believe in God and His word. The religion of Islam can be taught in our schools, but even the name of God is forbidden for Christians.

Humanism is at work turning our country into a secular state with the end goal of making every American an agnostic or an atheist. Under the guise of "separation of church and state" — which to the writers of the Constitution simply meant that there would be no state-sponsored religion — any public expression of Christian faith and spirituality has become illegal.

Because our country is being taken over by Humanism, its rules are becoming the thinking and behavior of our people. According to Humanism, there is no God; therefore, there is no such thing as "sin", no "right" and "wrong", no "spiritual law" that must be obeyed, and no judgment to come. The hated "Judeo-Christian" moral ethic is being replaced with "Whatever is right for you is right."

As a result, human behavior is running absolutely wild. Look at the portrayals on some of the TV ads, showing young people in every state of unrestrained abandonment. Many live together without marriage; and the expectation is that all teenagers will have illicit relationships in their dating. More than half the marriages end in divorce, with all the pain, immorality, and evil that results. In excess of **50,000,000** babies have been killed by abortion in this country alone, since legalized abortion became the law of

the land. TV, books, — even school textbooks, in some states — newspapers, and businesses are promoting homosexuality as a normal alternative lifestyle. Homosexual and polygamous marriages are on the horizon.

Let me ask you: **As a nation and a people, are we better off today** than we were fifty years ago, when we had strong homes and two-parent families, when divorce was a tragedy, immorality and pregnancy outside of marriage were shameful, when abortion was illegal; when children were disciplined at home and at school and they learned how to behave with manners and respect toward their elders, teachers, and authorities of the land, when decency was required in dress in all ages, when binge-drinking and drugs parties were the rare exception among young people, rather than the “norm”; when neither vulgar language nor sexual activities were verbalized in public? Has Humanism made us better? Has the crime rate dropped? Are we more law-abiding?

Whether the world acknowledges Him or not, God **does** exist, He **is** the Creator, and He **is aware of all that we are doing**. In His Word He warns, *“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). Concerning the evil that people choose to do, He said, *“... then take note, **you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out**”*. (Numbers 32:21)

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

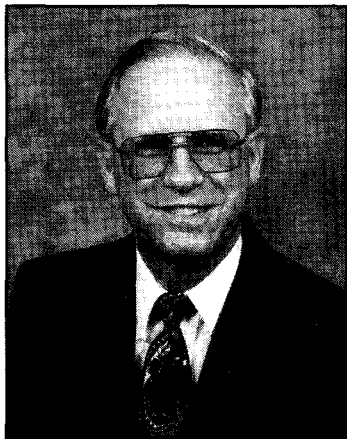
“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight! Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man!

“Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 5:20-24).

The time will come when the Lord Jesus will be *“... revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

My friends, we must return to belief in God, acceptance of divine creation and of Christian principles as taught in the Bible. Of course, as a nation, we have gotten so far away from God it is going to be difficult to turn things around. But if we don't, what future do we have? Are we bringing destruction on ourselves?





ACHIEVING GREATNESS

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

If asked to name a few of the great heroes of the Bible, men and/or women who exhibited extraordinary faith and commitment, most all of us would have little or no difficulty immediately thinking of such famous Bible characters as Moses, Abraham, Noah, Ruth, David, Esther, Peter, Paul, John the Baptist, Dorcas, and so on.

However, we can quickly get ourselves into trouble when we start trying to classify people or things in terms of their relative importance. I'm a big-time fan of baseball, especially of the St. Louis Cardinals. As an ardent baseball fan, I might be asked who I think should rank as the five best baseball players of all time. There is no way that I could answer that without there being tremendous disagreement from other baseball fans. There are nearly 250 players from years gone by who have been named to the Baseball Hall of Fame, dating clear back to 1936, with several of those players having played many years even prior to that. So, who would have the audacity to say that he knows the identity of the five best of all time? Add to that the fact that there are some really outstanding players who are still playing, some of whom will undoubtedly be added to the Hall of Fame later. In addition to that, there are many other very talented players who very arguably should have been voted into the Hall of Fame, but have not been. No, I couldn't even begin to decide just who I think should be classified as the five best players. Let me mention, too, that I could name many players who were great, who are even in the Hall of Fame, whose names would not even be recognized by many people who are avid fans of baseball today. The point is that there have been and are many great players, and it is impossible to determine without any dispute just which ones qualify as the very best.

We can experience the same kind of difficulty if we start trying to identify the greatest of the followers of God from the beginning until this present

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

time. We could approach the subject by trying to evaluate the greatness of all the characters of whom we read in the Bible, but using such an approach could not even likely result in a correct answer because of the fact that thousands and even millions of other disciples of the Lord have lived whose names are now known to no one. Some of the great ones remain nameless as far as we are concerned today, but that lack of knowledge on our part should not in any way detract from their greatness.

Let's make this quest for determining the greatest among God's people more current. If we were to ask ourselves about who we deem to be the greatest Christians that we either know personally or know about, who would they be? Perhaps I am mistaken, but I suspect that in a great many cases most of us would primarily think in terms of well-known preachers and other church leaders of various categories whose reputations have become more widespread than most. Let us hasten to acknowledge that many of these might very well be deserving of such recognition, but let's also realize that reputation and character are not the same thing. Let's further understand that one can still render marvelous service in the kingdom while humbly preferring to avoid being in a leadership role.

Greatness is not achieved in all realms by the same methods. Most great athletes or scholars or artists became great in their field because they had outstanding ability, true, but they possessed more than ability — they also possessed a drive and a determination to excel. However, greatness in Christianity doesn't come from a deep inner motivation to be the best. Rather, all who have attained greatness in Christ have done so by emulating Jesus in emptying themselves of themselves (Philippians 2:5-8), by becoming "*poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5:3), by doing and teaching the commandments of the Lord (Matthew 5:19), and by serving others and giving of themselves for the benefit of others (Matthew 20:26-28). Jesus clearly affirms these as identifying marks of greatness.

All these words are intended to impress upon us the fact that greatness is possible for every child of God. Hopefully, each and every one of us will have our spirits boosted by the realization that we all can be great in the eyes of that One who truly knows greatness when He sees it.

May the beloved Paul's admonition be our constant guide and source of enduring encouragement. May these words ever ring in our ears and throb in our hearts: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:58). †

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|----|
| Witnesses to the Birth ... | Stephen K. Guy | 11 |
| Christ's Examples | E. Claude Gardner | 12 |
| Jesus Christ as a Servant | Tom Kelton | 13 |
| Evidences of the Resurrection ... | Tom Dockery | 14 |

EVIDENCES

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|----|
| Creation or Evolution? | Jason Fox | 15 |
| The Civilization Explosion | Rex Banks | 17 |

THE WORD OF GOD

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----|
| Is the Bible Still Viable? ... | Hollis Miller | 21 |
| Want to Be Saved ...? | Aubrey Smith | 22 |

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

| | | |
|---|---------------------|----|
| Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice ... | Betty Burton Choate | 26 |
| Resurrection | Hans J. Dederscheck | 30 |
| Are You Walking in the Truth? ... | Rod Kyle | 32 |
| If | Anonymous | 33 |

SALVATION

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----|
| What Did Paul Determine? | T. Pierce Brown | 34 |
| The Great Commission | Charles E. Burch | 36 |
| If I Knew the Future | Glenn Colley | 37 |

THE CHURCH

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----|
| Identifying Characteristics ... | Kevin L. Moore | 40 |
| God's People, Loved and Loving ... | Ron Bryant | 41 |
| Pictures of a Preacher | Cecil May Jr. | 43 |

CHURCH GROWTH

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----|
| The Secret to Waking ... | John-Mark Wilson | 46 |
| Growing the Church | Dan R. Owen | 50 |

CHURCH HISTORY

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----|
| The American Restoration | Dr. Joe D. Gray | 52 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----|

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----|
| Lord, Change Our Hearts ... | Randall Caselman | 55 |
| Bring Our Wayward Brethren ... | Dale Grissom | 58 |

WORSHIP

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----|
| Glorifying God in Our Worship ... | Lewis G. Hale | 60 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| A More Excellent Sacrifice J. Robert Swain | 61 |
| Fixing Worship David Deffenbaugh | 63 |

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

| | |
|---|----|
| Fixing a Situation J. Randal Matheny | 65 |
| Do You Love Jesus? Wayne Barrier | 67 |
| Attitude Demar Elam | 69 |
| Seasoned with Salt Michael E. Brooks | 71 |
| What If ... ? Debra Griffin Mitchell | 73 |

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

| | |
|--|----|
| “Let Not Man Put Asunder” Dalton Key | 76 |
| Fathers Are Honored Bobby Dockery | 77 |

PROVERBS 17:22

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Humor | 79 |
|--------------------|----|

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

| | |
|---|----|
| God’s Refining Shop Allen Webster | 81 |
| Release from Your Prison Mike Sinapiades | 84 |

BIBLE QUESTIONS

| | |
|---|----|
| Whose 1000-Year Reign? Royce Frederick | 89 |
| How Are the Dead Raised Up? ... Charles Box | 90 |

ETHICS

| | |
|--|----|
| Be Spiritual Malcolm Parsley | 92 |
| What Are We ... ? Betty Burton Choate | 95 |

FEATURES, POEMS AND FILLERS

| | |
|---|--------------|
| The Man in the Glass | Inside Front |
| Editorial: Humanism at Work ... J.C. Choate | 3 |
| Editorial: Achieving Greatness ... Byron Nichols | 7 |
| 5-Minute Bible Study | 20 |
| Verse Search | 24 |
| How Do You Measure Up? | 39 |
| Quick Commentary | 45 |
| Do I Talk Differently? | 70 |
| Bible Find | 75 |
| Poem: The Great Commission F. O. Aniamalu | 87 |

FROM THE HEART OF ...

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Sojourner Mission Perry Hall | 104 |
| My Experience with the Sojourners ... Carroll Sites | 108 |

Witnesses to the Birth of the Son of God

Stephen K. Guy

Mankind has devised a system of justice based on witness testimony to validate a matter. The more credible the witnesses, the more certain the conclusion. The Bible gives no less than 18 witnesses to the birth of the Son of God.

1. — God, the Father (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3)
2. — The Patriarch, Jacob, called Israel (Genesis 49:10)
3. — The Prophets, such as Isaiah and Micah (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2)
4. — Jesus' birth records (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-28)
5. — The angels (Luke 1:26-37; Matthew 1:18-21; Luke 2:9-15)
6. — The unborn John the Baptist (Luke 1:41)
7. — Elizabeth (Luke 1:42-45)
8. — Jesus' mother, Mary (Luke 1:46-55)
9. — The word of God (Matthew 1:23, 26)
10. — Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25)
11. — Human history (Luke 2:1-7) - B.C.
12. — Divine history (Luke 2:8-14)
13. — The Shepherds (Luke 2:9-20)
14. — The Wise men (Matthew 2:1-12)
15. — Simeon (Luke 2:25-35)
16. — Anna (Luke 2:36-38)
17. — King Herod (Matthew 2:16-19)
18. — Jesus as a child (Luke 2:39-40, 52)

The testimony of witnesses is overwhelming. **The Son of God was born on the earth.**

Why did He come? That mankind could be "born again" of water and spirit (New Testament baptism, John 3:1-7) and be saved (1 Peter 3:21).

Is Jesus your savior and Lord? (Acts 22:16) He wants to be your Savior now. One day He will be your judge (Romans 14:10). †

Steven K. Guy works with the church of Christ in Booneville, Mississippi, USA.

Christ's Examples

E. Claude Gardner

About eight decades ago, E. Stanley Jones showed in one of his books that Christ taught effectively by *example* and not always by *precept*. He included the following as a tribute to the Great Teacher.

1. He did not discourse on the dignity of labor, but He worked at the carpenter's bench with His hands.
2. He did not argue the immortality of the soul — He raised the dead.
3. He did not speculate on the Trinity, but He said, "*If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, the kingdom of God is come nigh to you.*" All three in the Godhead are mentioned in this statement.
4. He did not teach on the worth of children, but put His hand on them to bless them.
5. He did not argue that God answers prayer; He sometimes prayed all night.
6. He did not talk about the glories of friendship and the need for human sympathy, but He wept at the grave of a friend.
7. He did not discuss the equal worth of all persons, but He went to the poor and the outcast.
8. He felt the pressing necessity of physical needs — He fed the 5,000.
9. Pilate and others speculated, "*What is truth?*" and He said, "*I am the Truth.*"
10. He did not teach about the necessity of humility, but girded a towel to wash the disciples' feet.

Luke records that in his "former treatise" he wrote "*of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*" (Acts 1:1). †

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

**What have you done today
that nobody but a Christian would do?**

Jesus Christ as a Servant

Tom Kelton

Jesus was a self-confessed servant. In Mark 10:45 He said, *“The Son of Man has come, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

These words are so familiar to us that we often miss the punch line. In Jesus’ day, the phrase “Son of Man” was frequently discussed. It was a Messianic title. The Jews were expecting the Son of Man to come at any moment. There was considerable speculation about the details, but on one thing everyone agreed — the Son of Man was coming to receive homage from the nations, particularly, of course, the Romans, whom the Jews loathed. Had not Daniel, in 7:14, prophesied that to the Son of Man was to be given *“dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him”*?

But Jesus changed the whole thing around and caused consternation! “No,” Jesus said, in effect, “You’re looking in the wrong direction. The Son of Man has come to serve, not to be served.”

On another occasion, Jesus did something just as bold. He linked the phrase *“Son of Man”* with suffering and rejection (Mark 8:31). The *“Son of Man”* represents the

highest conceivable declaration of exaltation in Judaism; the servant of the Lord is the expression of the deepest humiliation. His uniting these two apparently contradictory tasks was unheard of. Yet, He expressed that union in His life and teaching.

Jesus had no time for status seekers. He publicly condemned those who *“love the place of honor at feasts, and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men”* (Matthew 23:6,7). He forbade the pursuit of titles and honors. *“You are not to be called Rabbi,”* He said, *“for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your Father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called Masters for you have one Master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant”* (verses 8-11).

Had Jesus wished to rely on status and titles, He had the greatest. But to Him, service was more important than honors and rewards. Would to God that every Christian would follow His example today! †

Before his death, Tom Kelton was a writer and preacher.

Evidences of the Resurrection of Christ

Tom Dockery

Many today deny that Jesus rose from the dead. But, if we reject the resurrection of Jesus, we may as well reject the whole of Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:17). If Christ rose from the dead, He is certainly the Messiah; if not, He is an imposter.

The witness of the Bible. The Bible clearly states that Jesus was raised. His resurrection was predicted by Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:29-31; Psalm 2:7-12). In the New Testament, all four Gospel writers describe the resurrection (Matthew 12:40; 27:63; 16:21.) If we accept the Bible as God's Word, then we must also accept the resurrection.

The testimony of eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:5-9). These eyewitnesses were many. Certain women saw Him as they returned from the sepulcher (Matthew 28:1-10), and He was seen by the apostle Peter later the same day (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5). He walked and talked with Cleophas and another disciple on the way to Emmaus (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35). Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles, and to over five

hundred brethren at once, in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:7). Lastly, He was seen by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8). These witnesses were sober men who had no reason to perpetrate a hoax.

The changes wrought in the disciples. Before the resurrection, the apostles were weak and fearful, slow to understand and believe. But afterward, they were strong in faith and able to stand before crowds and kings.

The change the resurrection has caused in the lives of others. Thousands have been convinced of the resurrection and lived changed lives. Two prominent skeptics of a past generation, Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West, agreed to investigate the resurrection in an attempt to disprove Christianity. When they met again after several months to compare notes, each rejoiced to find that the other had been converted as a result of his study.

The resurrection proves conclusively that Jesus is the Son of God. Without it, Christianity would be vain! †

Tom Dockery (1937-1979) was a foreign missionary, preacher and teacher.

EVIDENCES

There are two major hypotheses on the origins of everything around us: Evolution and Creation. Most of those with a belief in Creation believe in a literal six-day creation found in Genesis 1 and 2.

Four major evidences bear out a literal Genesis account. What are they and how do they fit in with Genesis?

Creation or Evolution?

Jason Fox

1. Genesis states in the very first verse, *“In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* The Law of Cause and Effect states, “every effect must have an adequate cause”. Genesis is remarkable as it states that **God** is the cause, and creation is the *effect*.

Throughout the Bible the message is the same. Only God has the power to create everything that we see around us. **He is the un-caused first cause.** The very first verse of the Bible is in total harmony with the major scientific Law of Cause and Effect.

2. Genesis 1:11 states, *“And God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth’.*” From the beginning of creation, God established boundaries by which nature operates. The **Law of Biogenesis** states that “life comes only from pre-existing life, and each kind produces after its own kind”. The Bible declares that God is the originator of all Life, a statement that is certainly consistent with this major scientific law. Even today the creation of **new life** and the origins of **new kinds** has not been observed.

3. On the sixth day God, completed the creation, *“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them”.* Once God had finished His creation, that was it! There is nothing new being created, even today with man’s creative intelligence. The **First Law of Thermodynamics** tells us that energy is neither created nor destroyed. Ecclesiastes 1:9, *“What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.”* Again science bears witness to the accuracy of God’s word, the Bible.

EVIDENCES

4. Genesis, chapter 3, is the account of the fall of man and the entrance of sin and death into the world. From this point onwards in history, God's creation has known death. Isaiah 51:6, "*Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.*" The **Second Law of Thermodynamics** states that "everything is winding down". The physical universe around us is going from a state of order to disorder, from complex to simple. Everything is dying, everything is wearing out. It is man that brought this curse upon himself and upon all creation through disobedience. Science has again proven the Bible to be correct.

A man's conclusion, when he was confronted by God:

"I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ... You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:3-6).

"In the beginning there was nothing, and it exploded." From its very inception, the "**Theory of Evolution**" violates every one of these established scientific laws:

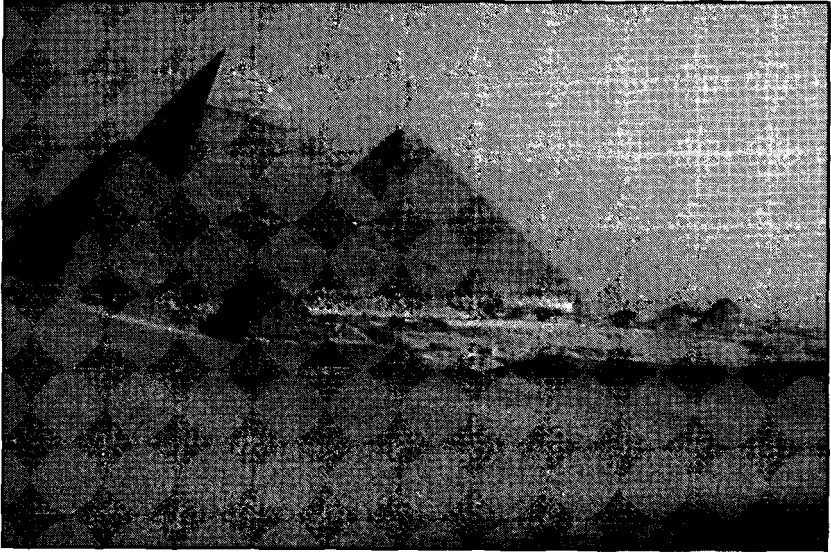
1. In the theory of evolution, there is no adequate cause for the effect.
2. In the theory of evolution, there was no life to beget life.
3. In the theory of evolution, there was no initial energy or matter, so none should exist today since no new energy is being formed.
4. In the theory of evolution, the billions of years required for the development of life and the universe would have, instead, seen its demise aeons ago, since everything is "winding down" and coming to an end.

Where does the evidence lead? To the conclusion that there was a six-day creation, or to a multi-billion year evolution? †

Jason Fox is a Christian, worshipping with the New Plymouth Church of Christ in New Zealand.

THE CIVILIZATION EXPLOSION

Rex Banks



It is clear from scripture that the people of the pre-Flood period had attained a very high degree of development. For example, in Genesis 4:22, Tubal-cain is described as “the forger of all implements of bronze and iron”, indicating that the pre-Flood civilization had mastered the technology and chemistry required by the smelting process. Moreover, Noah had been instructed by the Lord to

construct an ark “three hundred cubits (in length) ... fifty cubits (wide) and ... thirty cubits (in height)” (Genesis 6:15). The huge, seaworthy, box-like structure was about 224 metres long, 46 metres wide, and 27 metres high, and was capable of carrying about 125,000 sheep. Its construction was a prodigious achievement and proof of advanced engineering skills in the pre-Flood civilization. The exist-

EVIDENCES

tence of such expertise in that era may help explain an interesting historical fact.

In his illuminating little book entitled **The Puzzle of Ancient Man**, Donald E. Chittick states:

"With the possible exception of the amazing developments of the past 100 years, the further we go in the past, the higher the level of science and technology as reflected by human artifacts."

Chittick points out that a recurring theme emerges as ancient cultures around the world are examined. "Cultures appear to emerge in a high state of development and then decline after a period of time," says Chittick, and what's more,

Erich Von Daniken, (of **Was God an Astronaut** fame) points out that "ancient Egypt appears suddenly and without transition with a fantastic ready-made civilization." He explains:

"Great cities and enormous temples, colossal statues with tremendous expressive power, splendid streets flanked by magnificent sculptures, perfect drainage systems, luxurious tombs carved out of the rock, pyramids of overwhelming size — these and many other wonderful things shot out of the ground, so to speak. Genuine miracles of a country that is suddenly capable of such achievements without recognisable prehistory" (**Chariots of the Gods**).

A similar observation by evolu-

"Cultures appear to emerge in a high state of development and then decline after a period of time." Donald E. Chittick

"cultures around the world appear to have originated at about the same period of time of roughly 5,000 years ago (3000 B.C.)". They appear with an already developed high level of technical development and the puzzle is that "there is little if any evidence to support the idea that these ancient cultures experimented with engineering designs." Instead, "each culture appears full blown right from its beginning.

tionist researcher Graham Hancock (**Fingerprints of the Gods**) is recorded by Steve Carno in an article entitled "*The Mystery of Ancient*" which appeared in *Creation ex nihilo* magazine, March-May 1998:

"The archaeological evidence suggested that rather than developing slowly and painfully, as is normal with human societies, the civilization of

EVIDENCES

Ancient Egypt, like that of the Olmecs, emerged all at once and fully formed. Indeed, the period of transition from primitive to advanced society appears to have been so short that it makes no kind of historical sense. Technological skills that should have taken hundreds or even thousands of years to evolve were brought into use almost overnight and with no apparent antecedents whatever."

The preservation of this knowledge by certain descendants of Noah in the post-Flood period would explain the early pyramids of Egypt, the "stone calendars" of the Mayans, the ability of the builders of the ancient city of Sacsahuaman to maneuver rocks that weighed an estimated 20,000 tonnes and many other "anomalies". Clearly such handiwork requires an advanced technology, the fruit of many generations of trial and error, and the abrupt appearance of such expertise at the dawn of recorded history is consistent with the development of an advanced civilization that vanished abruptly from the face of the earth.

The early descendants of Noah, leaving the ark, migrated to the area that came to be known as the plain of Shinar ... *"and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and bake*

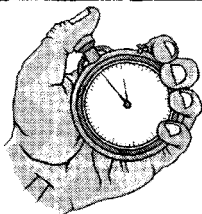
them thoroughly.' They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'

But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of man had built. And the LORD said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'

So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel..." (Genesis 11:2-9).

Obviously, people who would undertake to build such a city and such a tower were not "cave men" with no knowledge of construction. Some of the most ancient remains of cities show well-planned streets, indoor water, under-ground sewerage, and "advanced" construction methods that we cannot repeat even today! †

Rex Banks preaches and works in Hamilton, New Zealand. His web site is <http://www.angelfire.com/80s/rjdb/coc.html>. This excerpt is from Banks' book, *Archaeology and the Bible*.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY ON STUDY

2 Timothy 2:15 “Be _____ to present yourself _____ to _____, a _____ who does not need to be ashamed, rightly _____ the _____ of _____.”

1 Peter 3:15 “But _____ the Lord God in your hearts, and _____ be ready to give a _____ to everyone who _____ you a reason for the _____ that is _____ you, with _____ and _____.”

Acts 17:11 “These were more _____ - _____ than those in _____, in that they received the _____ with all _____, and _____ the Scriptures _____ to find out whether these things were so.”

Psalms 119:147, 148 “I _____ before the dawning of the morning, And _____ for help; I _____ in your _____. My _____ are awake through the night _____, That I may _____ on Your word.”

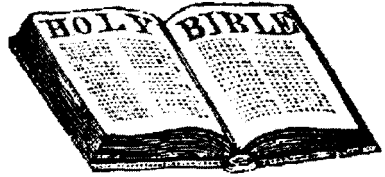
Romans 10:17 “So then _____ comes by _____, and hearing by the _____.”

James 1:22 “But be _____ of the _____, and not _____ only, _____ yourselves.”



2 Timothy 2:15: diligent, approved, God, worker, dividing, word, truth
1 Peter 3:15: sanctify, always, defense, asks, hope, in, meekness, fear
Acts 17:11: fair-minded, Thessalonica, word, readiness, searched, daily
Psalms 119:147,148: rise, cry, hope, word, eyes, watches, meditate
Romans 10:17: faith, hearing, word of God
James 1:22: doers, word, hearers, deceiving

Is the Bible Still Viable?



Hollis Miller

Religious newspapers, magazines, seminars, lectureships, and other such efforts are so common today that one has to run fast to keep up with them. All of them have their spiritual message to deliver. What is the church? What kind of leadership is needed? What is the preacher's pulpit responsibility? Is modern worship beneficial or detrimental? On and on the questions go, and editors, authors, and writers have their opinions. One is made to wonder if Joe Doe, who never went beyond the eighth grade and worships with a rural congregation with fifty members, can possibly know how his and the church's life should be conducted in the modern world.

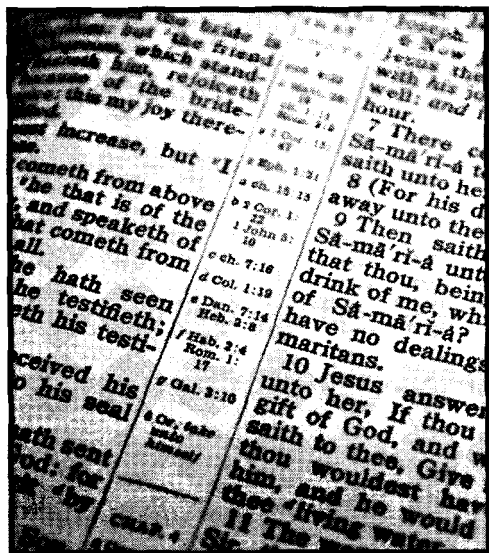
Is John's statement that his Gospel was written that men may know what to believe about Christ no longer valid? Paul told Timothy to preach the Word: should we add, "Also preach the greater insights of modern religious thinkers?" And what about Paul's affirmation that no man knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1

Corinthians: 11; cf. Isaiah 40:13f; Romans 11:34f)? Is it no longer true that the Scriptures are all we need for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness? Do they no longer equip us for every good work?

Facts of history cannot be removed, however much men may desire to do so. Jesus lived, taught, died, and arose. He can never be turned into some mythological figure. The books of the New Testament were written to guide churches and individuals into right thinking about Christianity. To view them as good for their times but not ours is to rob them of their divine mission for all men and all times. The church is a living body of believers in Jesus Christ, and it will remain that throughout the ages. The rule of faith for the church of every age is the Word of God, and that Word is found in the Scriptures — not in the dictates of men. †

Hollis Miller is a gospel preacher living in Murray, Kentucky, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD



*Want to Be
Saved?
Let's Study
Your Bible*

Aubrey Smith

The only way we can be certain that we are saved is to be sure that we are doing what God wants us to do. And, the only way we can know what God wants us to do is to study the Bible. Let me assure you that I'm not selling Bibles or religion. I do not endorse any religious denomination. I believe that anyone can pick up a Bible, study it, and know exactly what is required to please God. With daily Bible study, you can know how to be saved, how to worship God with the proper spirit, and how to live your life in a way that is pleasing to Him.

At this point, let me say that some versions of the Bible have been tainted. By that, I mean peo-

ple have rewritten the Bible in such a way as to give false meaning to God's word. Some versions are perverted to the point that by studying them you will be led astray. My advice is to stick with the tried and true. The Old and New King James versions, the American Standard, and the New American Standard are all good study Bibles. Most of the newer versions are paraphrased writings that are commentaries and do not make good study Bibles.

Can we know for sure that we're saved? Does God really have a plan of salvation? Does He expect us to follow a certain pattern of worship? And, if I don't know or don't do what He wants me to do,

THE WORD OF GOD

will I really go to hell? The answers to all four of these questions is yes.

Can we know for sure that we are saved? Study your Bible. I'll use the New King James, you use whatever Bible you have and read 1 John 5:13. *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."*

Does God really have a plan of salvation? Again, study your Bible. The Bible tells us that the only way to God is through Jesus. Read John 12:48-50 and John 14:6. The Bible tells us that you must know God's word. Read John 8:31,32: *"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'"*

Now, read Romans 10:17 and John 6:45. The Bible also tells us that we must believe. Please read Hebrews 11:6. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* Also read John 8:24.

God wants us to repent. In other words, turn away from our sins and follow Him. Study your

Bible. Read Acts 2:38 and Luke 13:3. What did your Bible say? The Bible says we must also confess Jesus as Lord. What does your Bible say in Romans 10:9,10 and Romans 6:3-5? You see, God does have a plan for our salvation. Look at Mark 16:15,16, then read Romans 6:3-5 and 1 Peter 3:21. Is baptism necessary for salvation? The Bible says it is. In fact, the Bible says you are not saved until you are baptized. Study your Bible. Don't be misled. Your salvation is too important to leave to chance. Study your Bible. If you haven't followed God's plan of salvation step by step, then do it now. Is it important? Jesus thought so. He thought it was so important He died for you.

After you're a Christian, is that all? Not really. Study your Bible. God wants faithful, obedient followers. Read John 14:23, Matthew 28:20 and 1 John 5:3. Also read Hebrews 10:23-26 and Galatians 5:16-26. You see; God really has revealed what He wants us to do and how He expects us to live. Whether or not you follow His plan and the pattern He has given you is strictly up to you. For me and my family, we've decided to follow Jesus. How about you? My prayer for you can be found by reading 1 Peter 1:2-5. †

Aubrey Smith works with the Lord's church in Utopia, Texas, USA.



VERSE SEARCH

Romans 2:1-16



1. Is it right to be guilty of the same offense as someone else and think yourself better than that person? *(vs. 1,3)*
2. What is God's judgment based upon? *(vs. 2)*
3. If both the one judging and the one who is being judged are both guilty of offenses against God, who will escape God's judgment? *(vs. 3)*
4. What are the characteristics of God that should lead us to repentance? *(vs. 4)*
5. What will cause a person not to repent? *(vs. 5)*
6. Whose deeds will we be judged by? *(vs. 6)*
7. The Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome were not getting along. If God did not divide them by heritage, how does God divide people? *(vs. 8,9,10)*
8. Who are the sinners without the law? Who are the sinners with the law? *(vs. 12)*
9. What is the difference in hearers of the law and doers of the law? *(vs. 13)*
10. Was it possible for a Gentile with no written law to be more righteous in God's eyes than a Jew who had the written law? *(vs. 13,14,15)*
11. Did God put into place a moral law of conscience that all men should know and follow? *(vs. 14,15)*
12. On Judgment Day what standard will God use to judge the secrets of men? *(vs. 16)*

(See inside of back cover for answers.)

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judges, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. **2** But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. **3** And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? **4** Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? **5** But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, **6** who *“will render to each one according to his deeds”*. **7** eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality. **8** but to those who are selfseeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, **9** tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; **10** but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **11** For there is no partiality with God. **12** For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law **13** (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; **14** for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the same things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, **15** who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them). **16** In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

New King James Version



Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice

Betty Burton Choate

The Meaningful Memorials

When we consider the purpose of baptism and the memorial Supper — two important observances and acts of obedience in Christianity that are often described as merely “rituals” — we see that they go far beyond such symbolic meaning. They are beautiful and important testimonies of Christ’s love for us and of our response of love toward Him.

(1) Baptism is our picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; our re-statement to the world that, even as He committed Himself to mankind in taking our sins and dying in our stead, we are committing our lives to Him. Baptism goes beyond death, though, and becomes **the new birth** (John 3:3,5) In the physical birth, water, blood, and the spirit of life are involved; 1 John 5:8 brings out this striking parallel: *“There are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree as one.”*

Baptism in **water** is the enactment of spiritual birth, the unseen elements being **God’s Spirit renewing the spiritual life within us**, and the **blood of Jesus** cleansing us of past sins and coursing through our souls to nourish, defend, and continually cleanse the newly-formed life within us.

(2) The Supper is a weekly memorial of His death and life, and of our own life in Him, with the expectancy of His return and our transformation to immortal substance. Obviously, God wants us to be constantly

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

reminded of these all-important high-points in salvation. Otherwise, He would not have placed such emphasis on the two acts that superficial-thinking people would be inclined to label as rituals. Christians, themselves, need to be careful not to fall into the same error. Baptisms, too often seen, may become empty ceremonies. Let us not forget how privileged we are to witness the wonder of the ages: the overcoming of sin and the birth of a new being into God's Family.

Let us not minimize, either, the greatness and the power of the Lord's Supper. It is not a time-consuming, boring ritual. It is our weekly sharing in the death that has given us life, and a deep involvement in its observance is vital to our spiritual well-being.

Perhaps one reason it seems easy for Christians to slip into absent-minded participation in the Supper is a lack of proper preparation.

(a) We need to realize fully the meaning of the memorial, its significance being far beyond ritualistic form.

(b) We need to review its foreshadowing, in the feasts of the Old Testament. Were those observances done casually? No. Minute laws were given by God, and they were followed in exact detail. The Shewbread, for instance, (*Leviticus 24:5-8*) was made fresh each week, by specific measurements. The bread of the Passover Feast was just as carefully prepared. Can you imagine the Jews in Egypt going out and buying from Egyptians some bread to use for that important meal?

Yet, today in most worship services, it is not Christian hands that have lovingly prepared the unleavened bread which we eat in memory of the body of our Lord. Many have allowed convenience to be the rule of the day.

Boxes of unleavened crackers that are labeled plainly "*not to be used for the Passover*", are our memorial. This bread that does not even meet the standard and requirement for the shadowy Passover is accepted by nonchalant Christians as perfectly all right for the memorial bread of our Saviour.

How often is it true that the matzos are bought, *without much forethought*, and served, *without much forethought*, to congregations who break and nibble them, *without much forethought*? Perhaps Paul's statement to the Corinthians is also applicable today: "*For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep*" (1 Corinthians 11:30).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

No, I admit that there is no law, as such, on this question; it is more a matter of attitudes. But don't our attitudes legislate much about our actual faithfulness in doctrinal questions? Maybe we would be more spiritual and more like the Biblical pattern of Christianity if our attitudes on these seemingly small but important details were not so lenient.

I cannot imagine Mary and Martha buying the bread from a common bakery; nor can I imagine them voicing such comments as, "Making the bread is too much trouble," or "I don't know how to make the bread. If I have to do that, I just won't prepare the trays for communion. Somebody else can do it," or "I get so tired of this."

Rather, I feel sure that the women who had known Jesus vied lovingly with each other for the privilege of using their hands in preparing those emblems so vital to the congregation's worship. I would think that it was not grudging and resentful thinking that filled their minds as they measured the flour and oil but, rather, that they indulged in a time of private worship as they worked. Surely they must have felt a special sweet nearness to the Lord they had talked with, and cooked for, and washed for, and loved while He walked in the world. How much we are missing by using our 'convenient' method for preparing the Supper!

Since both bread and the fruit of the vine are used in the memorial, the question might be raised, "Why suggest that the bread be personally prepared but then allow the fruit of the vine to be purchased?" Of course it would be good if we could do both, but it would not always be possible (because of climate or lack of land) for each Christian to tend his own grapevine. If one can do so, wonderful! If not, God has nowhere *required* it. In reference to the bread, if we can make it at home, the benefits will be our own. If that is not possible, God surely would not require what we cannot do.

(c) We need, congregationally, to spend more time preparing our minds for participation in the feast. We are taught to examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). Would this command not be obeyed more carefully if, prior to the Supper, prayer was engaged in, and followed by a time of silent introspection? Opportunity should be given to make confession of faults, to ask forgiveness of those we have wronged, to actually prepare *our hearts* for engaging in the Supper.

(d) Then, it would be helpful if Scriptures and relevant thoughts concerning the background, meaning, and purpose of the memorial could be given. We have become so ritual-conscious and time-conscious in our worship of God that, often, we have rendered void the very thing we pretend to

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

be doing. Our *purpose* in coming together, remember, is to *break bread*; it is not to fulfill a conscience-duty between eleven and twelve o'clock so that we can go on our way, absolved, for another week.

We, personally, as Christians have sometimes found ourselves in isolated places on the Lord's day, away from other Christians with whom we could commune. Once we sat in the shade of the ruins of the ancient Forum of Rome. As we prepared for partaking of the bread and the wine, we were struck with the paradoxes around us and in our hands. Two thousand years ago, Rome seemed the might of the world. The Forum itself was architectural splendor laid out for men to marvel at. Rome's power stretched over much of the known world and, at that time, one of her primary goals seemed to be the death of Christianity.

Christians, on the other hand, had no armies, no central earthly organization, no 'permanent' memorials in stone to remind the world of the greatness of their Lord. Instead, they had been given the very simple — and perishable — memorial, made up of bread and fruit of the vine. How enduring and influential in history's story could anyone have expected the memorial to be, especially with the passing of the centuries?

Yet, all around us was the testimony that 'permanent' memorials are seldom enduring, and man's might rises and falls. In contrast, the beliefs and practices of those first-century Christians continued in exactly the same way in us; and there we sat, in the middle of the rubble of Rome, with the bread that is His body and the cup that is His blood, the memorial that lives on after two thousand years, in spite of its seeming impermanence. †

Recipe for Communion Bread

1 cup of plain flour

3 Tbs. of olive oil

Dash of salt

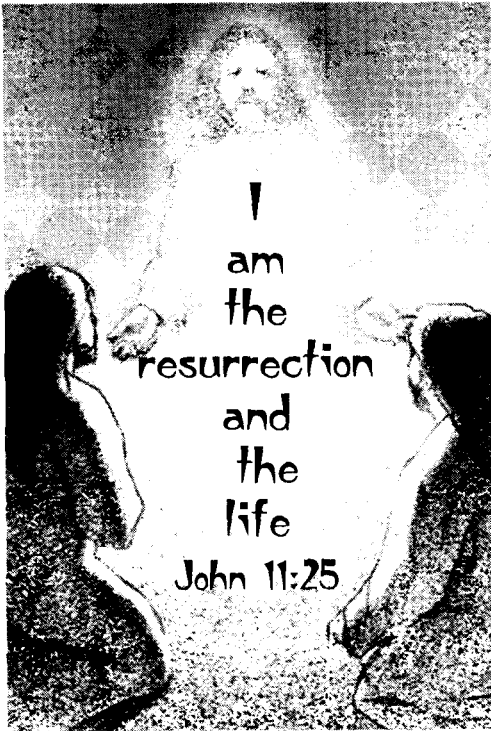
2 (approximately) Tbs. of cold water

Mix together just until a soft ball forms. Coat with flour and roll out on a baking sheet. Score in squares for easy breaking. Bake at 450 degrees until lightly browned.

Betty Burton Choate is the author of the study, Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice. This lesson, and the following lessons by sister Choate, are taken from that book.

Resurrection

Hans J. Dederscheck



The resurrection is the central theme of Christ's doctrine. Without the hope to live eternally with God, the Christian would not have any real goal to live for. Forgiveness, grace, eternal life with God would turn into a mere here-and-now idea.

Christ brought light into this world through the hope He gives to all men, to come forth from the grave to a life which is never-ending. This fundamental topic of Jesus' promises constitutes a power that brings human beings from sin into light, from hopelessness into the unique and wonderful expectancy of existence with the Savior.

The mere idea of living now but having no life after death makes people sad, and, therefore, they look for consolation and a substitute for belief in an after-life. Sadly, they think they find it in enjoying this world, "living today because tomorrow we are dead".

But whatever man can develop in this life on earth is like a meaningless ghost that passes away. "What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:3). Indeed, the hope of a person

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

without the hope Jesus Christ brought into this world is empty and baseless. Riches, fame, influence, enjoyment, an easy life and whatever else fills our heart — all these things are temporary and will vanish when death puts an end to our days.

But in Christ we have hope:

“I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ” (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

We expect to have that victory in Christ, because He demonstrated His power over death while He walked the roads of Israel. When Jesus called Lazarus out of his tomb He even called him by his name.

Why? We can be certain that, otherwise, all the dead would have come out into life (John 11:1-44)!

Jesus resurrected people by just saying the word. This did not occur in the shade of unseen actions; it happened publicly with many witnesses. Over 500 testified about the resurrected Lord. After Christ’s resurrection, many saints came out of their graves and appeared to many. Paul said that because of the resurrection he suffered whatever was necessary, and he followed Jesus even unto death, in order to obtain life eternal. The Scriptures tell us that God is not a God of the dead, but a God of the living, another testimony to the fact that there is life after death.

Jesus Christ spoke always with a strict authoritative language when it came to the point of His divinity, His coming as man’s savior, and the resurrection of all: those for life eternal with God, and the others for an everlasting condemnation. Belief in Jesus Christ would be in vain for mankind without the resurrection, but, because Jesus came forth from the grave, He serves as a guarantee that all souls after Him will be resurrected. What a glorious hope — not an imagination — to be with the Lord for all time to come. †

Hans J. Dederscheck is a preacher of the Gospel in Vienna, Austria.



Are You Walking in the Truth?

Rod Kyle

Some have said, “The only thing we take from life is truth.” With this the Bible agrees... “*Buy the truth and sell it not*” (Proverbs 23:28). So, are the inherited religious beliefs you hold found in the Word of God? Are you walking in the truth (3 John 3,4)?

The Bible clearly tells of the standard of judgment by which all will be judged (John 12:48). For this reason, Jesus commanded His audiences to search the Scriptures (John 5:39). According to 2 Timothy 3:15-17, they are the only source of knowledge that leads to salvation. I believe it.

We can be deceived (Matthew 24:4) and be eternally lost by believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12). Are your beliefs sourced from God’s Word alone, or are you constantly having to apologize or rationalize the practices of your “group”, because you know they have no Biblical foundation?

It is plain in God’s Word. You must do everything by its authority (Hebrews 8:5; Colossians 3:17; Matthew 28:20). To offend in one point is to break all of God’s laws (James 2:10). Bathing ones religious convictions in the light of God’s Word (Psalm 119:105) is not a terror to those who genuinely love the truth. After all, it’s not a matter of *who* is right, but *what* is right.

Are you believing and practicing what is right?

†

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.

IF

IF Christ stood before you right now and said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,*" **WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**

IF the Lord will save us without baptism, why did Peter command it? (Acts 10:47,48).

IF the Lord promises salvation without baptism, why did Peter say it saves? (1 Peter 3:21).

IF sprinkling *and* pouring are scriptural baptism, why did Paul say there is **ONE** baptism? (Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 2:11,12).

IF we can receive remission of sins without baptism, why did Peter say baptism is *for* the remission of sins? (Acts 2:38).

IF we get into Christ without baptism, why did Paul say we are baptized *into* Christ? (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3).

IF we get into the body of Christ without baptism, why did Paul say we are *baptized into* the body? (1 Corinthians 12:13). The body and the church are the same (Colossians 1:18).

IF Jesus Christ grasped your hand and said, "*If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments,*" **WOULD YOU LOVE AND OBEY?** (John 14:15; 15:14).



What Did Paul Determine?

T. Pierce Brown

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* What did he mean by that? He is not saying, "I will be ignorant of every subject except that which deals with Jesus." He is not saying, "I will neither learn nor speak of anything that does not deal with the crucifixion." He does not mean that if someone says, "Show me how to make a tent like that", or "How is the weather in Corinth?" or, "How was Timothy

the last time you saw him?" he would make no reply. He would indeed have been an unbalanced fanatic, and of course this is not what he was. His meaning is, "I may speak of many things, or I may not. I make no determination about that, for it does not matter. But one thing matters, and I do make a determination about that. I will speak of Jesus and His crucifixion."

For the world and for the church, there is one great, central, extensive and far-reaching truth that

SALVATION

is simpler, yet broader, deeper, wider, more profound and more significant than all other truths in the world. That is the truth that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, died for our sins. All other subjects may be optional. This one is required. There is one dominant purpose in our lives, and that is to keep central in our thinking and teaching the fact that Jesus died for us and all that is involved in it.

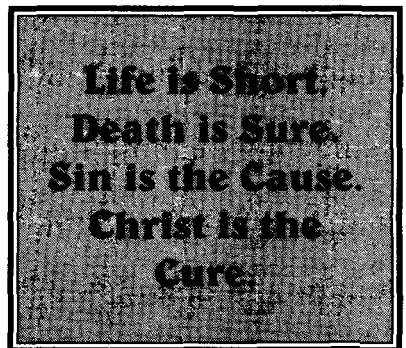
There is a principle in this that reaches far beyond the usual lessons we get when we talk about the cross of Christ. And that is: once we settle on the central matters, many times the little details will automatically be taken care of. Let me give some specific illustrations in practical everyday matters. We never bring up in our house the problem of whether to serve our guests Pabst Blue Ribbon, or Scotch on the rocks. That problem was solved a long time ago. When we go to the grocery store, the problem of whether to get Pall Malls, Luckies, King size or regular, with or without filters was determined long ago. I have never had to waste one minute on the question, "If I divorce Tomijo, will I let her have the car and the dog, the house, or the bank account?" That question was settled almost 60 years ago when we married.

Every person should build his

life in that fashion, and it would not only clarify his direction and purpose, it would solve many problems, save much time, and make many decisions almost automatic. It would involve everything one does, from "Of what church should I be a member?" to "What must I do to be saved?" and everything in between.

The simplest way to answer those questions is to ask, "What does Christ want of me?" Of course, you do not know the answer to that question in all things in life without a diligent study of the Bible, but this is to be the focal point, or reference point, to which all your activities point. Remember that we may do many things, but one thing we should determine, and that is to **let Christ and His sacrifice for us be the thing that causes us to act as we do.** †

T. Pierce Brown lives and preaches in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.



The Great Commission

Charles E. Burch

After our Lord's resurrection, He gave the great commission. *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:18-20). It is called the great commission, due to the enormous task involved in taking the gospel to all nations.

It is easy to become discouraged today because it seems that no one is interested in serving the Lord. Many of us can think back a few years and remember when it was much easier to baptize people into Christ. But it has always been that when it is so hard to reach people in one area, another area opens up. The following is part of a letter from Tex Williams, from World Bible School, Austin, Texas:

"In the West African Country of Nigeria, a student in a Catholic high school began taking a World Bible School Correspondence Course. Other students asked for

the course until a large number were involved.

"What the students were learning began to be discussed in their Bible classes. Some of the teaching nuns asked for the WBS course and passed on copies to the local parish priest who also became a student. He wrote WBS and asked for enough copies of the lessons to use in their high school Bible teaching program.

"A local Nigerian evangelist visited the school. After a lot of teaching, he baptized the priest, the nuns and most of the high school students. A New Testament church was begun. Fifteen months later they wrote that they had baptized over 500 new converts and started five new congregations in the area."

Thank God for the power of the gospel of Christ! When it lodges in honest and sincere hearts, it does produce fruit. So let us never become discouraged, but sow the seed at every opportunity. God will give the increase. Think of someone you would like to lead to Christ this year. †

Charles E. Burch is a retired preacher living in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

IF I KNEW THE FUTURE

Glenn Colley

As I study the Bible through the years, I am more and more amazed at the power and majesty of God. In fact, there are times when I re-read a passage and see it in a new light, and thereby find another "peak" of God's awesome greatness.

At one time or another we have all imagined what it would be like to know the future. When entertaining the thought for a moment, we think of benefits such as picking the stocks that will do well, knowing who will win political offices, and which cars of today will be classics tomorrow.

But that kind of thinking is quickly replaced by the fact that we would also know the actual length of our lives, the length of loved ones' lives, when terrible catastrophes would occur, etc., and then we sober up and decide that we do not want to know these things. We are clearly happier taking a day at a time. As Jesus said, *"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* (Matthew 6:34).

Now, consider that God does

INVEST IN THE FUTURE



SALVATION

know the future.

In the opening scenes of Joshua, we see exhortations to Israel's leader, Joshua, to lay before the people of God blessing and cursing. If they obey God, He will bless them richly. If they do not obey Him, He will abandon them and they will be destroyed by their enemies. Here's a sample: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:7)

This becomes really interesting when one considers that God, only a few weeks before, told Moses what the Israelites were going to do in the future.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not

among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods" (Deuteronomy 31:16-18).

God clearly knew what the people would do, and yet He still kept urging their faithfulness.

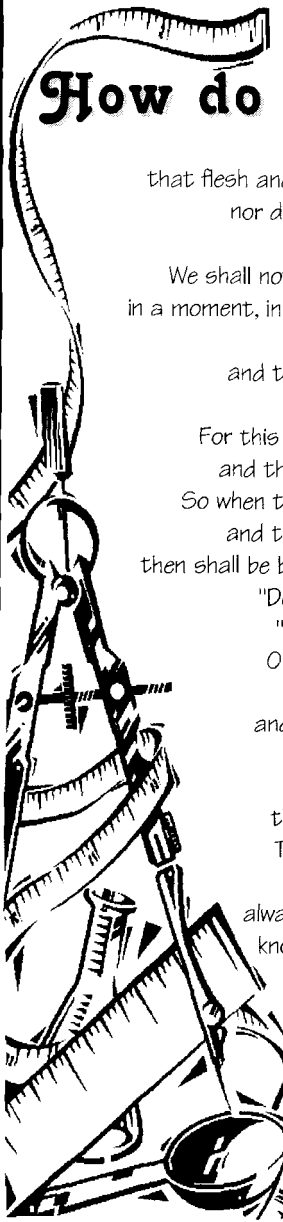
Bear in mind that God does not make people sin and be lost eternally, He allows us that decision (2 Peter 3:9) and He desires that all will repent of sins. Yet He knows how this is going to turn out. We must assume that He has always known.

This is an example of God's magnitude that boggles our minds if we think on it too long, and the object of this article is not to do that. It is rather to observe something hidden back in Isaiah 55:9 that we would do well to remember always:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9).

What is too much for me is a natural course with God. Always live to serve Him better and more. There is none other like Him. †

Glenn Colley preaches for the West Huntsville church in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.



How do you measure up?

Now this I say, brethren,
that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;
nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I tell you a mystery:
We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed —
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound,
and the dead will be raised incorruptible,
and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption,
and this mortal must put on immortality.
So when this corruptible has put on incorruption,
and this mortal has put on immortality,
then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?"

The sting of death is sin,
and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God,
who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren,
be steadfast, immovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord,
knowing that your labor is not in vain
in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58



Identifying Characteristics of the Lord's Church

Kevin L. Moore

1. Christ's name is exalted (Colossians 3:17; Philippians 2:9-11)
2. Christ is supreme authority (Colossians 1:18; 2:6,7)
3. Headquarters are heaven (Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 12:23)
4. God's Word is the standard (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17)
5. Autonomous congregations (Acts 14:23; 20:17)
6. Funded by free-will giving (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7)
7. Male leadership (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15)
8. Plan of salvation (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:37,38)
9. Day of worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2)
10. Form of worship (John 4:23,24; Matthew 15:8,9)
11. Vocal/heart music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)
12. Evangelistic (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:10; Acts 8:4)
13. Believes the truth (John 8:31,32; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13)
14. Practices the truth (1 John 2:3,4; 1 Peter 1:22; 3 John 4)
15. Teaches the truth (Ephesians 4:15; 2 Timothy 2:15)
16. Defends the truth (1 Timothy 3:15; Jude 3; 1 Peter 3:15)
17. Priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6)
18. Likeminded (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; Romans 15:5,6)
19. Love (John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; 1 John 4:7-21)
20. Good works (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26; Titus 2:14)
21. Benevolence (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27; Matthew 25:34-40)
22. Mutual edification (Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 14:12)
23. Practices discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)
24. Promotes family values (Matthew 19: 4-9; Ephesians 5:22-6:4)
25. Upholds moral principles (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 4:15) †

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

GOD'S PEOPLE, LOVED AND LOVING

Ron Bryant

Most of us understand that our individual interests and our individually-perceived needs vary greatly, not only from age group to age group, but from person to person. Yet, we also recognize that there are a number of areas where we are essentially the same. We have come to the understanding that we each share in common the desires for acceptance, for respect, for understanding, and the need to both give and receive love. We understand that we are happiest in an environment where these prevail.

I confess that the happiest moments of my life have been spent with my loved ones; my family and my friends. These times have been filled and ruled by a spirit of goodwill, of acceptance, of appreciation, and of affection. I cherish each of those moments. And, I believe that we all share in common the desire to know the embrace of relationships where love and acceptance are the response. In fact, I believe that we each need to readily admit that each of us needs such an environment.

The church, by God's design, is

a family. It is His family on earth. In it we are privileged to be brothers and sisters. We are privileged to belong to God and to one another. We are privileged to know God as our Father, and by Him we are directed to "*let brotherly love continue,*" to "*love one another*" (see Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22). These directives translate into the practical day-to-day character of our relationship in Christ. These directives are pointed, personal, and practical in their application, and in their benefits.

Yet, they are not just for our benefit. Jesus gave a new commandment, that "*we love one another,*" even as He loved us, so that "*by this all men will know that you are my disciples*" (John 13:34,35). The healthiest congregations are made up of people who love the Lord and one another. In these relationships they are cheerful, accepting of and open to one another. They communicate acceptance, appreciation, and affection. They respect and have good will toward one another, and they seek ways to

THE CHURCH

edify one another. In brief, they are a people, a family of believers, who love the Lord, love one another, and love those about them.

Great congregations are loyal to the Lord and to His will, and in all things they seek to hold fast to “sound doctrine.” Yet, great congregations are more than doctrinally correct! They are a people that are committed to the language of genuine acceptance and affection. They

live in an atmosphere of love — God’s love working in them and through them. This is the character not only of their fellowship, but also of their ministry, and especially of their efforts to reach others with the Gospel of Christ. They are a people that have heard the call of God, have come to know His love, and they are seeking to live it. †

Ron Bryant preaches for the church of Christ in Hollister, Missouri, USA.



The Sin of Omission

*It isn't the things you do, dear. It's the things you leave undone,
That give you a bit of heartache at the setting of the sun.
The tender word forgotten, the letter you did not write,
The flowers you did not send, dear, are your haunting ghosts tonight.
The stone you might have lifted out of your brother's way;
The bit of heartsome counsel you were hurried too much to say;
The loving touch of the hand, dear, the gentle and winsome tone,
Which you had no time nor thought for, with troubles
enough of your own,
Those little acts of kindness, so easily out of mind,
Those chances to be an angel which everyone may find,
They come in night and silence, each chill, reproachful wraith,
When hope is faith and flagging and a blight has dropped on faith.
For life is all too short, dear, and sorrow is all too great
To suffer our slow compassion that tarries until too late.
And it's not the thing you do, dear, it's the thing you leave undone,
Which give you the bit of heartache, at the setting of the sun.
— Margaret E. Sangster*



Pictures of a Preacher

Cecil May Jr.

God's plan for the continuation of the faith is 2 Timothy 2:2: "*The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*" Four pictures are given of the faithful, able men who are needed.

A good soldier: "*Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3). Hardship is an integral part of a soldier's life. There are no air conditioners in fox-holes. Ducking bullets and mortar

shells in full body armor is uncomfortable anywhere.

We, too, are in a war, not against flesh and blood, but against "*rulers of this darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6:12). We fight against false ideologies, delusion and philosophies, and against "beautiful people" who powerfully model the lie that happiness is found in sexual promiscuity and decadent affluence.

Preachers who spend the entire

THE CHURCH

week in their study and preach only to those who assemble to hear them may never know those hardships, and never truly engage the enemy.

A disciplined athlete: *"If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned, unless he competes according to the rules"* (2 Timothy 2:5). He must minister within the bounds set by Christ, and he must run as though only one could win, while at the same time giving heart and talent and time to help others be winners. He must avoid being disqualified for manipulation, self-promotion, dishonesty, or sexual misconduct.

A hard-working farmer: *"The patient hard-working farmer must be the first to partake of the crops"* (2 Timothy 2:6). It takes diligent labor to produce a good crop. Plowing, cultivating, fertilizing, weeding, all take work and time. Each has its parallel in sowing and working the seed of the kingdom. Harvest does not immediately follow sowing. *"See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain"* (James 5:7).

A studious worker: *"A workman who does not have to be ashamed, correctly handling the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). In too many cases, preachers become enamored with ingratiating them-

selves with brotherhood opinion leaders, working to get invited to whatever lectureships, "our camp" favors, attending luncheons, and promoting programs, until the study of the Word is forgotten. Sunday morning brings a poem, a sentimental story, a text that is read, but otherwise passed over. The most blatant sinner is not convicted, and no one is challenged to serve, sacrifice, or deny self. People who come for spiritual nourishment receive instead spiritual cotton candy.

Many preachers, progressives and traditionalists alike, *"wrangle about words to no profit"* (2 Timothy 2:14). Whether they spout the latest politically correct abandonment of something else the brotherhood has held dear, or cross their sound "t's" and dot their fundamental "i's", they do not face the real issues of life and eternity that their starving congregation wrestle with day by day.

When members' souls are shriveling, their homes hurting, their children rebelling, and their society pushing on them at work and in recreation to abandon faith and morality, we can help them only by bringing them an authentic and relevant word from God.

"Preach the Word!"



Cecil May, Jr. is director of the School of Preaching at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Genesis 1

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light....

7. Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so....

10. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good....

11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so....

So the evening and the morning were the third day....

16. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

17. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, ... So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

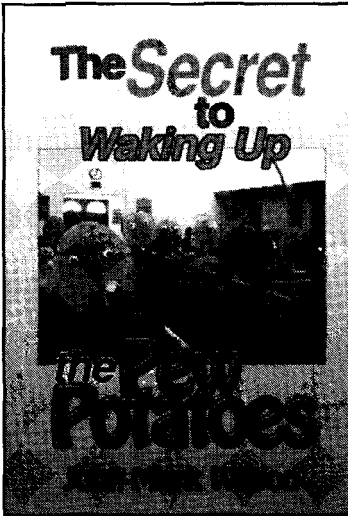
24. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so.

Many — even those who claim to believe the Bible — would say that these words in Genesis 1 are not to be taken literally; that God did not make the earth in six literal days. But to make the “days” mean “aeons” of time would not work well, even according to scientific knowledge of nature today.

Consider **first**: Combining Genesis 1 and John 1, we have the identification of the three persons of the Godhead involved in creation.

Second: Fossils of tropical plants have been found in abundance in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, indicating that at one time the entire earth's climate was more mild and uniform than it is today. Evidently, the waters above the firmament formed a “greenhouse” canopy, which fell during the flood of Genesis 7.

Third: Plants were made on the third day, the sun and moon on the fourth day, flying things on the fifth day, and animals on the sixth day. How could the plants live for “aeons” without sunlight? And how could they have been pollinated without bees and insects for two “aeons”? And, since everything is so interdependent, **how could any of these things have lived without the others for “aeons” of time?**



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**. Some are from booklets by Dillard Thurman.

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

How Does God's Family Grow?

Never forget that God's family is a living thing, and there is a process by which living things grow and multiply: there must be planting, nourishing, fruit-bearing, and harvesting! All Christians are taught by their Lord:

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that **beareth not fruit** he taketh away: and every branch that **beareth fruit**, he purgeth it, that it may **bring forth more fruit**."*

*"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot **bear fruit** of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same **bringeth forth much fruit**: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."*

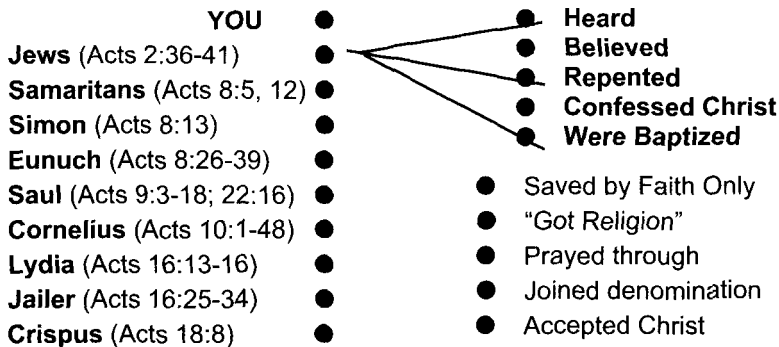
"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:1-8).

From The Secret to Waking Up the New Potatoes by John Mark Wilson.

CHURCH GROWTH

“Search the Scriptures” (John 5:39 & Acts 17:11)

Instructions: First, draw a line from “YOU” to what you did to be saved. Then draw a line from the case of conversion to what the Bible says they did.



Does the account of your conversion compare completely with what the Bible demanded of these people? (Read Romans 8:16; also Jeremiah 10:23 and Proverbs 14:12)

After Conversion

Acts 2:38
Acts 22:16

Saved: Past Sins

Things to Remember

New Creature _____ 2 Corinthians 5:17
Romans 6:4

Babes in Christ _____ 1 Peter 2:2
1 Corinthians 3:1,2

Critical Period _____ Matthew 4:1,11
1 Corinthians 10:11,12

Possibility of Falling _____ John 8:31
1 John 2:1,2
Acts 8:11,24

Representative _____ 2 Corinthians 3:2
1 Timothy 4:12

Christ, your Example _____ Hebrews 12:1,2
1 Peter 2:21

1 Timothy 4:16
Revelation 2:10

Saved Eternally

God Wants You to

Love Him First _____ Matthew 22:37
Matthew 10:37

Study _____ 2 Timothy 2:15
Acts 17:11

Pray _____ Philippians 4:6,7
1 Timothy 2:8

Assemble _____ Hebrews 10:25-27
Matthew 18:20

Give _____ 1 Corinthians 16:1,2
2 Corinthians 9:6,7

Help Save Others _____ Matthew 28:19,20
John 15:1,6,16

SALVATION FROM SIN

WHAT IS SIN? I JOHN 3:4 JAS. 4:17

ALL HAVE SINNED ROM. 3:23 I JOHN 1:8

**NOT
ENOUGH
TO BE**

IN A WAY PROV. 16:25 JER. 10:23
MATT. 7:13-14

RELIGIOUS GAL. 1:13-14
ACTS 3:26-39

HONEST ACTS 23:1
ACTS 22:16

MORALLY GOOD ACTS
10:1-6 & 48

BELIEVER JAS. 2:
19-26

ALMOST PERSUADED ACTS 26:
27-29

"HEAR YE HIM"

MATT. 17:5

BELIEVE MARK 16:16
JOHN 8:24

REPENT ACTS 2:38
LUKE 13:3

CONFESS MATT. 10:32-33
ACTS 8:37

BAPTIZED MARK 16:16
ACTS 2:58

WHO? MATT. 23:19 ACTS 8:12 HOW? ROM. 6:3-4

THUS ADDED ACTS 2:
41-47

REDEEMED ACTS 20:23
COL. 1:13-14

**ALL SPIRITUAL
BLESSINGS
IN CHRIST** EPH. 1:3

BLESSED ARE DEAD

Rev. 14:13

ETERNAL LIFE

I John 5:11

SALVATION

II Tim. 2:10

NO CONDEMNATION

Rom. 8:1

NEW CREATURE

II Cor. 5:17

Baptised Unto. Gal. 3:27

Confess Unto. Rom. 10:10

Repent Unto. Acts 11:18

Believe Unto. Rom. 10:10

HEB. 5:8-9 ROM. 2:8-9

CHURCH GROWTH

GOD'S PATTERN

As Applies To

MUSIC IN THE WORSHIP

★ *The pattern is specified:*

1. Vocal — Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:15; Jas. 5:13
2. Instrumental — (Not in the pattern)

The law of exclusion must be observed!

★ *Old Testament Examples: Romans 15:4*

| | | |
|---|-------------|--------|
| Cedar | NOAH | Gopher |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">WOOD</div> | | |
| Oak | | Pine |
| <p>Genesis 6:14-22 Generic: Wood Specific: Gopher</p> <p>When God specified the kind of wood, all other kinds were excluded.</p> | | |

| | | |
|--|-------------|------|
| Camel | JEWS | Lamb |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">BLOOD</div> | | |
| Cow | | Pig |
| <p>Exodus 12:21 Generic: Blood Specific: Lamb's Blood</p> <p>When God specified the kind of blood, all other kinds were excluded.</p> | | |

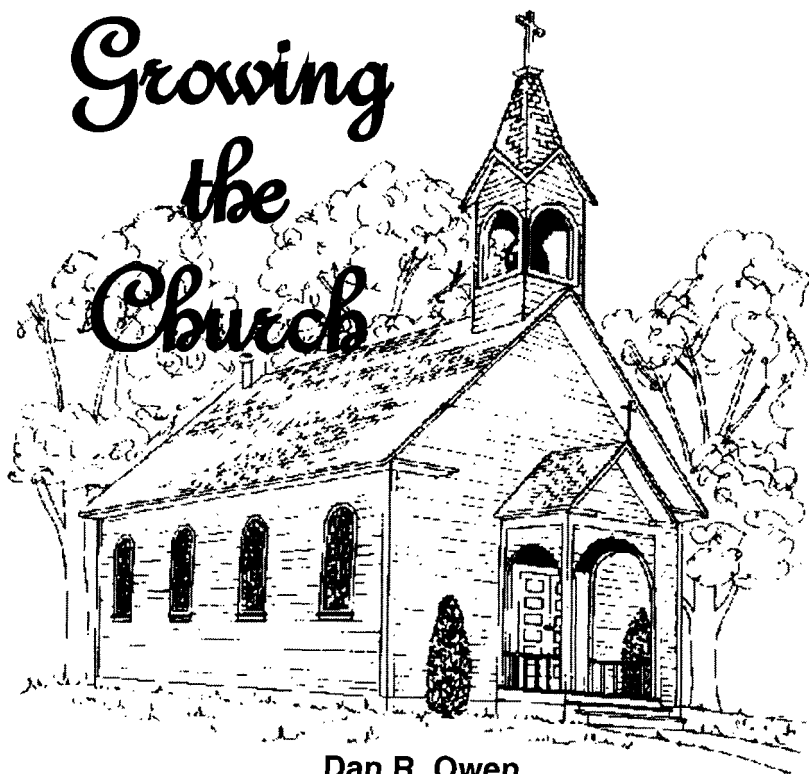
★ *Applications To The Christian's Worship Today: Heb. 8:5*

| | | |
|---|--------------|------|
| Guitar | MUSIC | Sing |
| Piano | | Harp |
| <p>Ephesians 5:19 Generic: Make Music Specific: Sing</p> <p>When God specified the kind of music (vocal), all other kinds were excluded.</p> | | |

| | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Pie and Ice Cream | LORD'S SUPPER | Bread and Fruit of Vine |
| Cookies and Water | | Horn and Eggs |
| <p>1 Cor. 11:23-26 Generic: Eat and Drink Specific: Bread and Fruit of Vine</p> <p>When God specified the kind (Bread and Fruit of Vine), all other kinds were excluded.</p> | | |

God is displeased and division among His people results when His specific commandments are not obeyed. Adding to or substituting constitutes a violation of the law of exclusion, and disrespects the silence of the Scriptures.

Growing the Church



Dan R. Owen

What can we do to aid the growth of God's kingdom and to allow God to work most effectively in the lives of people? Scripture actually tells us several things about the role we play in the advancement of the church. Consider the following ideas.

First, growing the church means gaining the favor and respect of the people around us. The ancient church "*had favor among*

the people" because they were always serving others in kindness and love. They also enjoyed the favor of the people because their conduct among the people inspired respect and admiration. When the community at large respects us, many doors are open for the Gospel.

Secondly, growing the church means meeting people where they are. Paul talked about how he tried to adapt to the culture of whatever

CHURCH GROWTH

people he was trying to influence with the Gospel. He said, "I became all things to all men that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). We do this when we try to be in the activities of the people, adapt to the styles and customs of the people, and be sensitive to the culture of the people we are trying to win.

Thirdly, growing the church means spreading the Word to people. When they respect us and accept us as friends, we must then actually teach them the truth of God's Word. This is the means by which God enters their hearts and begins to work on changing them from the inside out.

Next, growing the church means growing spiritual leaders. Once there is an initial group of obedient believers, they need to be encouraged, nurtured, and taught the ways of God. Those who deepen their relationship with God and become examples in the way they live and the way they serve become the leaders of God's people. These leaders encourage others to do right and grow spiritually and equip others to become active servants in the kingdom.

Finally, growing the church means creating an environment of cooperation and unity. This environment is based on a common allegiance to the truth of God's Word.

It is based on a common sense of mission. It is based on each member seeking the good of every other member. These values and this environment are ultimately fostered by good leaders among the people. Doing all these things creates an environment in which the kingdom of God will certainly grow. †

Dan R. Owen works with the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

The church is not a showplace where a professional clergyman performs while people come to watch. It is meant to be a vibrant, loving, honest, committed, worshiping fellowship of true believers who keep one another accountable and corporately minister the Word of God with boldness. Churches like that will grow numerically as God Himself adds to the number (Acts 2:47). Equally important, they will grow in unity, knowledge, and maturity (Ephesians 4:13) as the saints are equipped to be ministers.

— Selected

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

20th CENTURY — LAST THIRD

Slowly an uneasiness began to pervade the minds of certain church leaders. A number of men expressed dissatisfaction with the church in *Voices of Concern* (1960's). Periodicals generally held to truth. The faculties of most Christian schools were still composed of teachers faithful and active in the Lord's church, although the pressure for advanced degrees was increasing. Negative assessments of the church arose more and more from within. Attacks, rather subtle at first, rose to crescendo level in the late 70's and 80's. The certainty of faith was labeled narrow-minded dogmatism. As in the 19th century, the uniform nature of message, worship, and work was viewed as an absence of the Spirit. As more preachers and faculty members were trained in denominational seminaries, the restoration concept was questioned — then rejected by many. The new hermeneutic challenged the concepts of restoration. The massive network of a national television program and its perceived pressure for support set the stage for change. Later, its messages altered and it was regarded by some as the 20th century 'society', although many continued its support, reluctant to abandon this symbol of hope born in the 1950's.

Doctrines were subjectively challenged. The concept of divine, absolute, unchanging, understandable truth became suspect to many professed Christians.

Situation ethics was openly espoused by some in our schools and pulpits. A woman led a large outdoor devotional at a mission forum at a Christian college. Teachings concerning divorce and re-marriage were revised, often to suit a personal circumstance. The leaders of the old and

CHURCH HISTORY

respected church at Belmont in Nashville, Tennessee, slowly drifted away from the past, until its leader laid claim to direct inspiration. The Crossroads church in Gainesville, Florida, and the Boston church leaders genuinely sought to reach out to the lost in the post big meeting/film strip era with a method which ultimately included an authoritarian approach far beyond anything in the scriptures. The old arguments about the danger or error of a 'pastor' system were renewed as multi-membered, highly educated staffs took over the work of many in the church — sometimes even its leaders. Many Christians, busy attaining prosperity, laid down the Bible and left the conversion of neighbors to the fine hired staff. Youth sometimes worshipped separately from those who were older. Entertainment often became central to youth work, sometimes even central to worship. Many teaching organizations have arisen that have no supervision from a congregation or elders.

Also, materialism has become the focus of many. Fewer Christian mothers are at home to bless their children daily. Young men are not encouraged to preach. If one insists, he is often encouraged to have a back-up profession. The promised care of God is often forgotten. Our buildings sometimes are virtual cathedrals; our homes mansions; our cars luxurious; our portfolios impressive. Contributions have increased dramatically. Many, no longer interested in personal outreach, are willing to pay others generously to teach the lost for them.

There were struggles all along the way. Multiple thousands of faithful Christians still pursued the Lord's Way enthusiastically. The change was subtle and slow. The deceleration of, and then the cessation of, growth was difficult to discern. Flavil Yeakley predicted it in the 1970's, but few believed him. True, fewer were being converted, and many more of our children were losing their conviction and/or allying themselves with denominations. Yet, somehow the dream still seemed real.

Some periodicals continued to inform and inspire. Others filled needed niches well. Yet, overall the papers appeared unable to solidify the ranks of Christians as the 'Gospel Advocate' and others had done in years past. Perhaps that was an impossible expectation. Some editors chose to ignore the difficulties, while others so concentrated on problems that they neglected to teach the truth. The reading choice was often blandness or jalapeno. Thus many chose to ignore the avenue of periodicals entirely. The internal fight was both difficult to recognize and to face objectively. Many seemed not to have ever known the beautiful church that I remember as a youth.

CHURCH HISTORY

The change was gradual at first, and then large numbers denied the heritage of the Bible and the church. The restoration plea became anathema to many. The uniqueness of the church of the Lord was denied by many, including leaders. Some argued that undenominational restoration was impossible. Interaction with denominations in fellowship and worship became fairly normal; and many could see little difference between the church and its neighbors. There was talk of a vast departure from the church; pessimism was the norm; division was expected. The mood of the late 20th century was much like that of the same period in the 19th century.

A SUMMARY — TWO CENTURIES

We have seen that in each of the past two centuries, the flow of unity and growth of the church has followed a visible, recognizable pattern. There have been two cycles of three steps, each lasting about 35 years. †

| | 19th Century | 20th Century |
|--|---|---|
| First Third of the Century | A period of study, determination of course, establishment of basic details of faith; limited growth. | A period of introspection, disillusionment; search for what had gone wrong. Basic faith; limited growth. |
| Second Third of the Century | A time of expansion, excitement; Sense of destiny - harbingers of long period of growth; seeds of difficulty; mission controversy. | Surprising new interest by neighbors; unprecedented growth; excitement; seeds of difficulty; mission vision. |
| Last Third of the Century | Dissension; introduction of new ideas; challenge to basic authority of Bible; inner division; slowing growth. | Challenge from within; introduction of new ideas; internal division; Biblical compromise; growth slowed. |

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

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hosea 4:6).

LORD, CHANGE OUR HEARTS AND USE OUR HANDS

Randall Caselman

The question to Jesus was, Who is my neighbor? He proceeded to tell of the Good Samaritan. No doubt His choice of heroes startled His Jewish audience.

Not only did Jesus' teaching startle His hearers, so did His behavior. Mark records three inci-

dents in quick succession that must have startled both Jesus' disciples and His accusers. Jesus rid the demoniac of his demons in the cemetery and then commissioned him as a witness of what He had done for him. Next, Jesus was touched by, and healed, an unclean



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

woman. Then, He took the hand of a dead girl and restored her life. These people were all considered unclean, and Jesus' touching them would have made Him unclean also, but Jesus knew He was God's hands to serve others.

John records Jesus' outlandish behavior with two women. At Jacob's well in Sychar, Jesus strikes up a conversation with an immoral Samaritan outcast. His behavior resulted in many believing in Him. Everyone is familiar with the story of the woman taken in adultery. Instead of condemning her, Jesus forgave, commanding that she give up her life of sin.

You see, Jesus ministered to those possessed by the devil and sin, to the unclean, to the dead and dying, to those imprisoned by bigotry and sin. Jesus was God's hands, God's source of help and holiness. Jesus saw the suffering of others as potential reservoirs of God's mercy, so He extended mercy and grace. He became God's instrument of righteousness. Paul, speaking in Romans 6 to those who had experienced New Testament baptism and had been raised to walk a new life, says we, too, are to be such instruments of God, instruments of righteousness.

It took the early church some time to adjust to this new concept of becoming God's instrument in serv-

ing others. Seemingly, the Jerusalem church had to be jolted by severe persecution before it would take the Good News to Samaria. Phillip had to be approached by an angel to go preach to an Ethiopian in Gaza. Peter needed a rooftop vision before he would enter the house of Gentile Cornelius with the Gospel. It took a supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit for the church at Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul for the first mission journey.

Perhaps the question is this: What must God do to get the message across to us? When will we become His hands, His feet? When will we become His instruments of righteousness, mercy, and grace? **Only, only when we allow Him to change our hearts.** Paul tells us in Philippians to let the heart, the mind, the attitude that was in Christ be in us. What kind of heart did Jesus have? One of humility and submission. Jesus had an attitude of servanthood. Jesus was willing to place our interests before His own interests. He was moldable clay in the hands of the potter, God. We must become like Him. The question is: Are we willing?

God's challenge to this writer and to you, the reader, is to become His instruments of righteousness, living sacrifices; to become His hands by having our minds trans-

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

formed into the image of His Son. When this happens, we, too, will be:

- Casting out Satan and evil by teaching and exemplifying the Word in our daily walk.

- We will be touching the unclean, the AIDS patient, and those in our society no one else is willing to serve and save.

- We will have a forgiving heart rather than just pointing our finger at the sins of others.

Who can read their Bibles without being aware that God placed us here to serve and glorify Him by serving and saving others? Let us begin today to be more Godlike in all we do, by having a heart filled with an unconditional love for people.

Consider these Scriptures:

- *"A new commandment I give you, love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another"* (John 13:34,35).

- *"Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet"* (John 13:14).

- *"If a man is trapped in some sin, you who are spiritual should*

restore him gently. But watch yourself, you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burden and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1,2).

- *"As often as you did it unto the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me"* (Matthew 25:40).

- *"For if God so loved us then we ought to love one another"* (1 John 4:11).

Why not startle your world by conforming to the image of Jesus, by loving and serving others... all others! †

Randall Caselman preaches for the church of Christ in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

Help Wanted

If you cannot be a doctor,
Or a nurse so trim and neat,
You can call and give some comfort
To the sick ones on your street

If you cannot give a dollar,
You can give a word of cheer
To the folks who always need it,
Any day or any year.

God is always glad to use you.

Money never does it all;
He needs willing souls for service
Summer, winter, spring and fall.

— James A Sanaker

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



Bring Our Wayward Brethren Back

Dale Grissom

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Restoring the erring is one area in which the church is badly failing.

It is reported that only fifty percent of new converts remain faithful for over five years. Brethren, this just ought not to be! We must do a better job of nurturing our babes in Christ — encouraging, teaching, loving, and bonding, making them feel a welcome and important part of the family of God.

The apostle Paul admonishes us to restore the erring in the spirit of meekness. How can we accomplish this if we don't care about our brethren? And how can we truly care for someone we barely even know? The church is the family of God and, as such, we must work to develop a genuine love for each other. Only by spending time in prayer for each other, and by spending time getting to know each other, can we have the bond that God would have us to develop. If we have the love we should have for our spiritual family, we will be grieved when a brother or sister goes back into the world.

Every person who obeys from the heart the Gospel plan of salvation becomes a child of God, and God adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). He will always be a child of God. Though he may become unfaithful, he does not cease to be a part of God's family; he is, instead, a wayward child. Consider the children of Israel, how time and time again they were unfaithful. God grieved over their sins, yet forgave them each time they repented and turned back to Him.

Each of us must truly become our brother's keeper. We must work to set the proper example for others, and we must encourage and build each other up. We must not be timid about talking to one another concerning matters of the soul and where we will spend eternity. May each of us determine to become more spiritually minded and more sensitive about the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Brethren, we are preparing for eternity. Christianity is a serious business. Let's be sure we don't take it too lightly — our souls are dependent upon it. †

Dale Grissom works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

**If you're heading in the wrong direction, God allows u-turns.
“...If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand
before Me...” (Jeremiah 15:19).**

Glorifying God In Our Worship

Lewis G. Hale

Some people seem to think that God is glorified in all their worship. After all, they are doing it to please God. What makes anyone think that God is so “picky” as to demand that everything be done a certain way?

A study of the Scriptures will reveal that not all worship pleases God or glorifies Him.

Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to God in their worship, which He had not commanded (Leviticus 10:1). Fire came out from God and consumed both men. Drastic and sudden punishment! What they were doing was “worship”, but it did not please God, and He was not honored by it. Jesus said the people of His day worshipped in vain because they taught for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).

Citizens of Athens worshipped idols in ignorance (Acts 17:23).

Jesus taught that “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). If what we do in worship is not directed by the revealed truth of Almighty God, it will not be acceptable.

The Bible is clear about our worship. We are commanded to

sing (Ephesians 5:19), to make melody in our heart (not on a mechanical instrument).

We are to **pray** (1 Corinthians 14:15).

We are to **give** on the first day of every week, as God has prospered us (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

We are to **commune** with Him in taking **the Lord’s Supper** on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24).

We are to **teach** the Word of God (Acts 2:42; 11:26).

We have no right to change the worship of God. Only God knows what will please Him. He has revealed this in the Bible. The apostles were to teach all things whatsoever Jesus commanded them. If He taught it, it will also be found in their teachings.

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord” (Colossians 3:17).

“*Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let’s make sure we glorify God in our worship. †

Lewis G. Hale works with the Southwest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.



A More Excellent Sacrifice

J. Robert Swain

Hebrews 11:4 and Genesis 4:3-4

The story of Cain and Abel found in Genesis 4:3,4 is intriguing for many reasons. It is the account of the first murder — the killing of one quarter of the population by another quarter of the population, no less. It is a story of brother killing brother. It is also the first written account of man worshipping God.

We are not given insight into the instruction that God gave His first worshippers. Both brothers evidently knew what would be acceptable to God. Although

Genesis does not mention that God desired a blood sacrifice, through His acceptance of Abel's gift and His rejection of Cain's we can assume that they knew what sacrifice to offer. The sacrifices recorded during the Patriarchal Age were animal sacrifices, but under the Mosaical Age both blood and grain sacrifices were commanded by God. I believe that these two brothers had direction from God to offer an animal sacrifice. Otherwise, it would be hard to condemn Cain for some-

WORSHIP

thing that he did not know to do. Abel chose to follow those directions and Cain did not.

God has always viewed worship of Himself as important and to be taken seriously. In Leviticus 10:1-7, priests used a “strange fire” that God had not authorized for sacrifice on His altar. This resulted in dire consequences for the priests who assumed that God would not mind. We are commanded to worship God “*in spirit and in truth*”. We should not assume that God will accept our sacrifice of worship if it is done properly but in the wrong spirit, or if it is done in the right spirit but not done according to direction through His holy word.

Many times I have wondered why Cain made the sacrifice that he did. It has been suggested to me that perhaps Cain did not give his best. Scripture does not tell us that. Hebrews 11:4 states that “*Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice*” (NKJV). It does not say that one was good and the other was not. It implies that both were good but only one was acceptable.

I do know that Cain’s response of anger and revenge was not acceptable to God. Perhaps this selfish attitude was the root of the entire problem. He could have responded differently to God’s disappointment with his sacrifice. He might have shown sorrow and

repentance, learned from his mistake and corrected the problem. Instead, he resented God’s rejection of his efforts and then lashed out in jealousy at his brother who had obeyed God.

When we worship God today, we must make sure that it is done in the way that God directs ... in spirit and in truth. If our worship contains practices that were not a part of the first-century church’s worship, as recorded in the scriptures, then we must correct our practices. “*In vain they do worship me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9). If we sit in the assembly and bow our heads to worship in submission, but our hearts and minds are not in submission, we must make a change.

When we search the scriptures and discover that we **do** need to make a change, let’s make sure that we take God’s correction and instruction with humility. Let’s not compound the problem with a prideful or resentful attitude.

When we worship, we must make the effort to give God our very best and not hold anything back. Only then will our sacrifice be acceptable to God and be considered a more excellent sacrifice! †

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

FIXING WORSHIP

David Deffenbaugh

The saying goes, “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” A variation on that theme (and sometimes more applicable) is, “If it’s not broke, you’re not trying hard enough.” In the church today there is a multitude of efforts to fix worship. Obviously, many people think it’s broke — others disagree. Some would say that if it wasn’t broke before, it certainly is now.

Ought worship to be a concern? Yes, and a thousand times yes! Simply knowing that God desires true worshipers should be more than adequate motivation to make it be among our chiefest concerns (John 4:23). Does worship need fixing? Possibly. Paul certainly thought it needed fixing at Corinth and Colossae (1 Corinthians 11:17; Colossians 2:23).

Where do we begin in fixing worship? That, of course, depends on the nature of the worship problem. But, if a car is not running right and in need of fixing, it is hardly appropriate to get a new paint job, shiny wheels, and new upholstery. The car may look better, be more attractive and appealing. Its enhanced appearance may give a certain degree of satisfaction and pleasure. But it still isn’t fixed.

So often efforts made to fix worship are inappropriate in that they are superficial, cosmetic, and misdirected — a new paint job instead of a tune-up or even engine overhaul, if you will.

As important as worship is, consider that God sees some things as even more fundamental than worship. In other words, if there are not some things already in place, the worship debate is a moot point. Remember these words? *“To obey is better than sacrifice”* (1 Samuel 15:22). *“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings”* (Hosea 6:6). *“I desire compassion and not sacrifice”* (Matthew 9:13). *“To do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord rather than sacrifice”* (Proverbs 21:3).

Enhanced worship services won’t repair broken worship or gloss over broken worshipers. Another saying goes, “The best place to start is in the beginning.” The beginning point in our great concern for our worship to God is with those fundamental matters God looks for in those who would worship Him.

If our attitudes, our hearts are

WORSHIP

wrong, by all means we must fix them. But in fixing ourselves, let us not make the mistake of thinking that we have the authority to change what God wants us to do in our worship, or to turn it into a self-gratifying entertainment experience.

Worshiping God humbly, reverently in song (Colossians 3:16), pouring out our hearts to Him in prayer (Philippians 4:6), remembering our Lord's death for us (1 Corinthians 11:23-30), hearing Him

speak to us through a study of His word (Hebrews 6:1-3), giving sacrificially to support His work (2 Corinthians 9:5-7) — these elements of worship are not ours to "fix". Our part is to participate with all our heart and soul, worshiping at the feet of our God.

If it *is* broke, by all means fix it. †

David Deffenbaugh preaches for the South College congregation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, USA.

10 Reasons Why You Should Attend Every Service

1. **To be with Jesus (Matthew 18:20).**
2. **For the personal peace and satisfaction that can be found with Jesus (Philippians 4:7).**
3. **In order to have Scriptures opened to us (Luke 24:45).**
4. **In order not to quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).**
5. **In order to receive comfort and fellowship (Hebrews 10:24).**
6. **In order to feed and exercise our faith (Romans 10:17).**
7. **So as not to miss a potentially life-changing experience (John 20:19,24,26-28).**
8. **To maintain our spiritual fervor (Matthew 24:12).**
9. **In order to feed our spiritual appetites (Matthew 5:6).**
10. **Because this is where I would want to be when the Lord returns (Mark 13:32,33).**



Fixing a Situation

J. Randal Matheny

A baggage handler removing the luggage from the Sao Paulo-Rio flight picked up a passenger's pet carrier — and saw the dog was dead¹. He quickly called his superior, who, recognizing the situation was ripe for a legal suit, paged his

supervisor.

He thought for a moment and told his subordinate, "There's a pet shop near the airport. Go and get a dog like this one."

"But when she gets home she'll know it's not her pet!" he objected.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

“Once she gets out of the airport, it will be her problem. And she’ll not look closely in the bustle of claiming her luggage and getting away,” replied the chief.

So while the subordinate found a similar animal at the pet shop, the chief stalled the dog’s owner.

Finally, the pet carrier appeared with a live animal. The owner took one look at the dog and exclaimed, “This is not my dog!”

The supervisor went to bat. “Ma’am, with the difference in pressure and temperature during flight, and considering the stress the pet feels, the animals often act strangely until they get in familiar surroundings.”

“Well, this flight certainly changed my dog,” she declared, “because when I put him on the plane, he was dead. I decided to bring him back to Rio and bury him close to me, since I loved him so much.”

How often do we try to fix a situation or improve a bad moment, only to make things worse? Somehow, we think our dishonest schemes can put things right.

When things go wrong, however, there is no substitute for honesty, confession, and transparency.

Problems and situations are to be not managed, but faced squarely. Character determines whether we will work around a problem or deal

openly with it. *“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them”* (Proverbs 11:3, ESV).

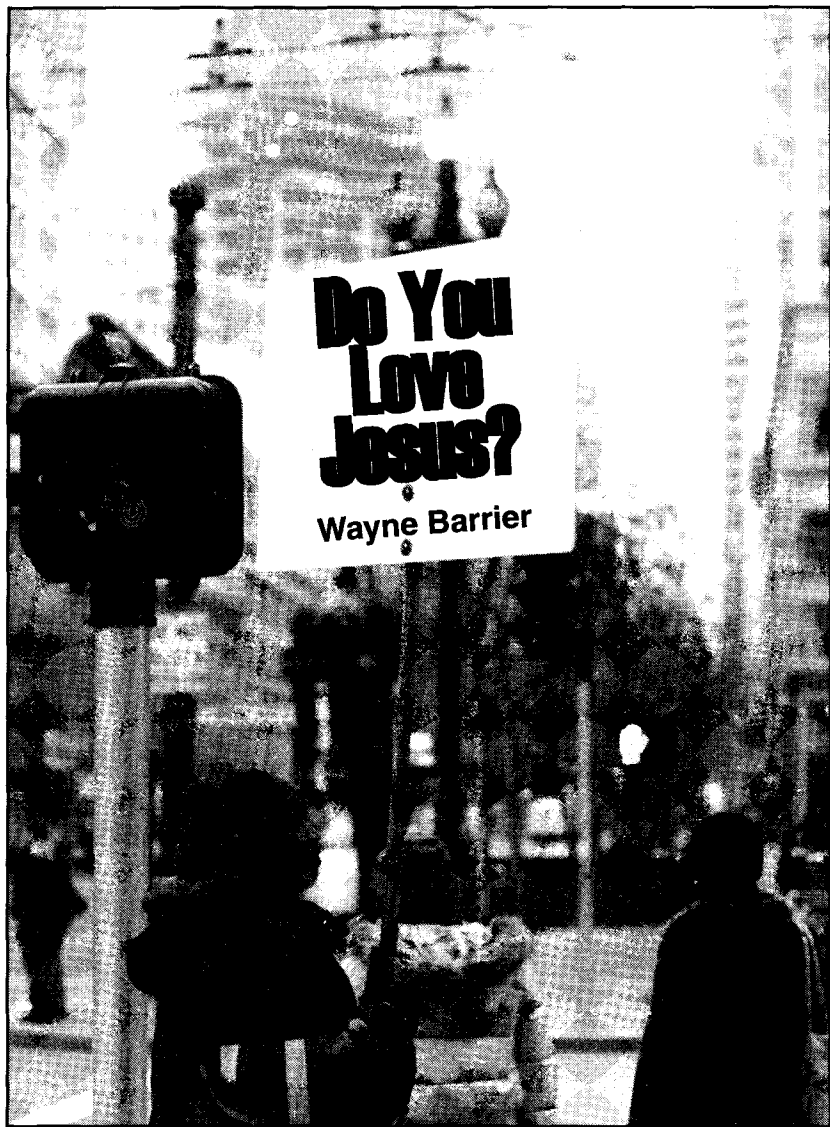
“But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2).

When we come clean with mistakes and are open about bad situations, we might even discover the dog was dead to start with.

†As told to me by the relative of an airport official in Sao Paulo. †

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.

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doing” (Jeremiah 23:21,22).



Hundreds of millions of people from across the world believe that

Jesus is the son of God. These people also will answer quickly that

they love Jesus, if asked the question as Jesus asked Peter in John 21:15-17. It would seem to be the only reasonable feeling toward Jesus. He loves us and died on the cross to provide a way for us to be forgiven of our sins, making us acceptable for entrance into His heavenly kingdom. Notice how the question is asked in John 21:15-17, "... 'Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?' He said to Him, 'yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him a third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'"

Today, Christians should be asking themselves the same question. Jesus loves us and we should love Him. Do you love Jesus? Jesus says in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." We love Jesus if we know His will and His commandments and obey them. Jesus specifies the way we

should live, worship, and serve in His kingdom. Do we obey his teaching in all these areas?

We love Jesus if we love one another. Notice what Jesus says in John 15:12-14, "*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.*"

We love Jesus if we walk as he walked, and walk with Him. Consider Ephesians 5:1-2; "*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.*"

Love for Jesus is expressed as we love our wife or husband, children or parents. Those who love Jesus love His word, His kingdom, and the souls of all men. Following Jesus in love involves work, worship, helping to teach and save others, and even love for our enemies.

Jesus says one cannot divide his loyalty and love (Matthew 6:24), between God and the treasure and physical things of this world.

Do you love Jesus? †

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

Attitude

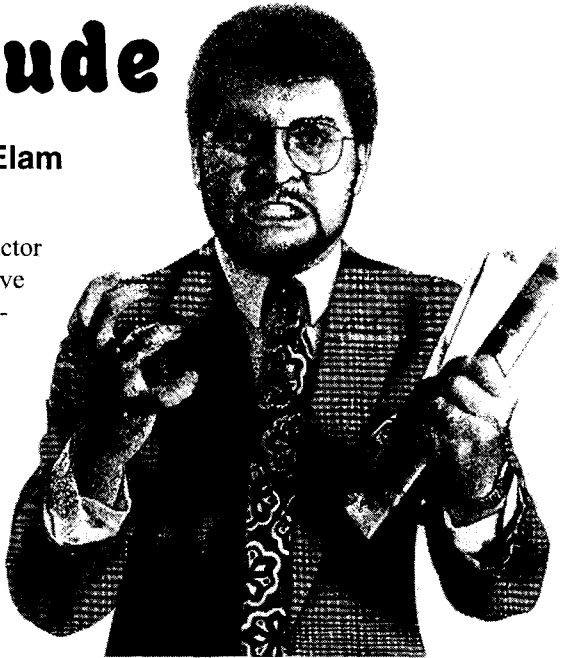
Demar Elam

Attitude is a vital factor that controls how we serve the Master. Many people need attitude adjustments. If attitudes were fine-tuned, the work of the Lord would be increased, and the joy of Christian living would come to the forefront.

Attitudes determine levels of service for Christ. What is your attitude toward Him, toward the church, toward fellow Christians, toward the lost, and toward life in general?

All too often, the attitudes of individuals rock back and forth between positive, negative, and rotten. When people view life from such perspectives, precious little brings happiness, people rob themselves of the abundant life in Christ (John 10:10).

Concerning attitudes, Charles R. Woods has said, "The important and decisive factor in life is not



what happens to us, but *the attitude we take toward what happens*. The surest revelation of one's character is the way one bears suffering.

Circumstances and situations may color life, but by the grace of God, we have been given the power to choose what color that shall be. The effect that misfortune, handicap, sickness, and sorrow have upon life is determined by the way in which we meet them."

Life can, and often does, throw us a curve. The way we handle these surprises molds and shapes us into the people we are. I like what

Willa Cather said about trees: "I like trees because they seem more resigned to the way they have to live than other things do." Paul thought similarly when he said, *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need"* (Philippians 4:11,12).

Surely Christians ought to possess upbeat, victorious attitudes! Again, Paul said, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13).

When attitudes are being tested and tried under the stresses and strains of the many pressures of life, when it seems we've lost the battle and defeat looms before us, remember the words of Michel de Montaigne, "There are some defeats more triumphant than victories."

The Lord said to Paul, *"...My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). †

Demar Elam is the Director of Mission Studies at Regions University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Do I Talk Differently?

"...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). The Christian is to begin, from the day of his baptism into the Family of God, to reshape his thinking according to God's way of seeing, loving, and behaving toward his fellow man. As his thinking changes, his speech will also change.

He will not curse or use God's name in swearing. Jesus said, *"...do not swear at all...."* (Matthew 5:34) *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain"* (Exodus 20:7).

The Christian is not to be boastful, or dishonest, knowing that everything he says reflects on the God whose name he wears. While others may enjoy dirty jokes or gossip or cutting people down with hard words, this is not the speech of one who is following Christ. *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one"* (Colossians 4:6).

Next: Do I Treat Others Differently?

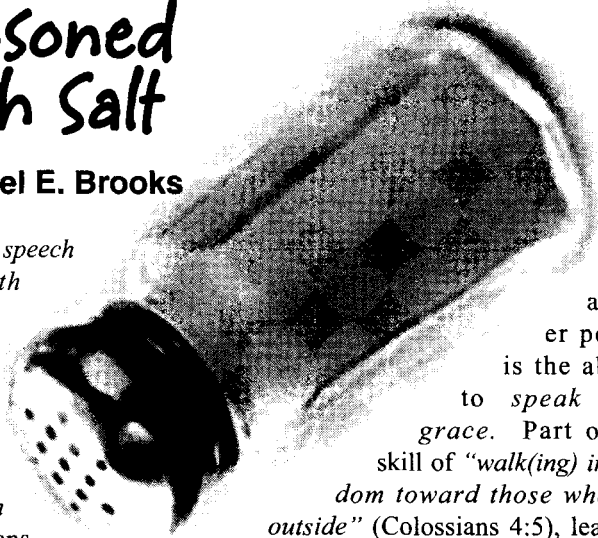
Seasoned with Salt

Michael E. Brooks

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6).

Languages are difficult and frustrating to me. I don't learn other languages easily, and since I travel and work in a number of different countries, I find that I am often where I don't speak the language. I am dependant upon translators, "non-verbal communication", the other person's limited knowledge of English, or the few words or phrases I may have picked up. Communication is difficult at best. I have often wished for the Apostles' gift of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-13), but that was for another age, and I must struggle as best I can.

More important, however, than knowing how to speak the language



of another people is the ability to speak with grace. Part of the skill of "walk(ing) in wisdom toward those who are outside" (Colossians 4:5), learning to speak with grace, is specifically enjoined to Christians that we might properly represent Christ and His Gospel to an unbelieving world. It is not so much knowing *what* to say as it is having *the ability to say it so that it will be received well*.

Grace is often defined as "unmerited favor", meaning God's treatment of sinful mankind, not giving us what we deserve, but what we need.

There is another way the word is used, however. That is as a quality or characteristic of *loveliness* and *charm*. We describe a good hostess as "gracious" or we say of someone, "She has a graceful walk." It is in this latter sense that Paul calls for graceful speech. Our words, and

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

our manner while speaking them, should have a loveliness about them. They should attract others positively, and lead to a welcome reception.

So often we do just the opposite when we speak. We say things harshly, angrily, and thoughtlessly. We threaten, warn, and antagonize. Others are repelled, not attracted, by what they hear from our lips. When we speak unkindly, it scarcely matters whether what we say is true. Even if it is, it will still cause others to turn away from us rather than draw them nearer. How much better to speak kindly, considerately, with beauty in both tone and content of our message.

Along with grace, our speech is to be "seasoned with salt." This is an interesting phrase in this connection. Though there are a number of ways it might be understood, I believe one implication is that there should be substance to our speech. In Ephesians 5:4 Paul forbids the use of "foolish talking" and "coarse

jesting" as "not fitting" for Christians. We are to take life seriously and to be concerned with those things that are of eternal significance. As we speak with non-believers, our spirituality should be manifest. God should be glorified and his Kingdom exalted. Salt is a preserver and a seasoning. Its presence in food makes the food taste better, provides certain necessary nutrition, and helps preserve the food against contamination. Our speech should have within it that provides protection from corruption, gives flavor to life, and meets the needs of the spirit.

Foreign language is a challenge. However if I can speak of God's love in Christ Jesus, and if I can encourage faithful obedience to His will, I can communicate the eternal message of salvation. Nothing is more important than that. †

Michael E. Brooks works with the Highland Park church of Christ in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. He works full time in missions and is Director of Khulna, Bangladesh, Bible College.

What life means to us is determined not so much by what life brings to us as by the attitude we bring to life; not so much by what happens to us as by our reaction to what happens.

— Lewis L. Dunnington

What if all of us who claim to be Christians woke up one Sunday determined to obey God completely? What if every Christian said, **“Today I will worship God in spirit and truth,** obeying God’s commandments in the Bible (John 4:24)? I will remember my Lord’s suffering, the payment for



What If ... ?

Debra Griffin Mitchell

my sins (Acts 20:7; Matthew 26:26-28). I will pray, expecting an answer (Matthew 21:22). I will sing from the heart, unimpaired by man-made instruments (Ephesians 5:19). I will heed the Scripture and the preacher’s lesson (Acts 20:7; 2 Peter 1:19). I will greet other saints as people who are forgiven, as I am forgiven” (Philippians 4:21; Ephesians 4:32).

What if on Monday morning, we all woke up renewed by Sunday’s worship and filled with praise and gratitude for a new day? What if everyone said, **“Today I will listen to God by reading the Bible and talk to Him in prayer?** I will walk in the light, imitating Jesus (1 John 1:7). I will love my family and teach my children to love God (Matthew 22:37,38). I will count my blessings instead of complaining” (Philippians 2:14; 4:11).

What if on Tuesday morning, delighted with our efforts on Monday, we all decided to try even harder to be like Jesus? What if everyone said, **“I will treat other people as I would like to be treated** (Matthew 7:12)? I will smile and speak kindly to everyone (Colossians 3:12). I will be honest and truthful in everything I do (Philippians 4:8). I will view every person I meet as a soul precious to God, looking beyond the sinful surface to the broken heart, the scarred mind, the soul in desperate need of the Savior. I will

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

seek ways to share the Gospel of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20)."

What if on Wednesday morning, just a bit discouraged because we didn't succeed completely on Tuesday, we surrendered again to Christ and admitted our dependence on His strength (Philippians 4:13)? With that in mind, what if everyone said, **"I will pray for all those who do not seem responsive to the Gospel?"** (2 Peter 3:9). I will pray that my enemies will renounce hatred and violence and become children of God (Matthew 5:44). I will sow the seed and wait for God to give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7). I will continue to be compassionate and kind, even in the face of rejection. I will be humble, remembering that it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

And what if we recommitted daily to God, reading the Bible, praying, praising, demonstrating compassion, taking opportunities to teach, trusting God in every success or failure, sharing joys and sorrows with other Christians, bearing one another's burdens, and seeing heaven beyond the troubles of this world?

What if each Christian focused on the goal of bringing just one soul to the Lord?

And what if each convert woke up on Sunday and Monday and every day, determined to

worship and study and grow and teach and love, imitating Christ—deliberately, consciously, persistently imitating Christ?

What if, just for this moment — now — today, I concentrate on these commitments, knowing that God will help me to have the strength for now! After all, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)! I don't have to be strong enough for every day, all at once. Jesus warned — and promised: *"Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* (Matthew 6:34).

What if we obey today?

Then we would indeed be representative of Christ in the world: *"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

And though some would not obey the Gospel, we would be astonished at thousands who would come, weeping with remorse and then with joy, eager to walk with us as we walk with Jesus.

Then we might wonder, each of us, **"Why didn't I try harder, sooner?"** †

Debra Griffin Mitchell is a Christian wife, mother, and writer, living in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

BIBLE FIND

The 12 Sons of Jacob

(Genesis 29:32-30:24; 35:18)

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

Reuben (Leah) — “He has seen my misery.”

Simeon (Leah) — “one who hears”

Levi (Leah) — “attached”

Judah (Leah) — “praise”

Dan (Bilhah) — “He has vindicated.”

Naphtali (Bilhah) — “my struggle”

Gad (Zilpah) — “good fortune”

Asher (Zilpah) — “happy”

Issachar (Leah) — “reward”

Zebulun (Leah) — “honor”

Joseph (Rachel) — “may he add”

Benjamin (Rachel) — “son of my right hand”

“Let Not Man Put Asunder”

Dalton Key

Today’s flippant attitude toward marriage is nothing new. According to Edward Gibbons, the renowned historian, the divorce problem was one of five underlying causes contributing to the fall of the Roman Empire. Seneca spoke of Roman women as married to be divorced and divorced to be married. Many citizens of Rome were said to have marked the passing of time more by the names and number of their spouses than by months or years.

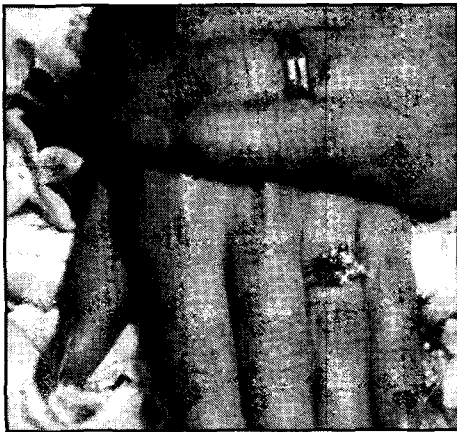
No wonder the Apostle Peter wrote of those of his day “*having eyes full of adultery*” (2 Peter 2:14).

Sadly, some things never seem to change.

But neither has divine truth changed: “*And he answered and said unto them, Have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Matthew 19:4-6).

Regardless of what society may say, regardless of what today’s media may attempt to mandate, we are not beasts, grunting and snorting our way through life at the mercy of nature’s baser instincts; we are God’s handiwork, created in God’s image, after God’s likeness (Genesis 1:26).

Mating partners come and go within the animal kingdom as desire and opportunity permit, but God has designed something more sublime — and more permanent — for people. Marriage is meant to last a lifetime. †



Dalton Key is the editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the North Amarillo congregation in Amarillo, Texas, USA.



Fathers Are Honored by Obedient Children

Bobby Dockery

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? says the Lord of hosts..." (Malachi 1:6).

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Our fathers deserve to be honored, but there is always a danger that the honor we give them will be more a thing of bare formality than a genuine outpouring of respect. We may simply go through the motions without really honoring.

There is a spiritual dimension to this problem as well. All of us have two fathers — one on earth and One in heaven! It may be that we are guilty of a lack of genuine honor and respect where each of them is concerned!

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

2) This is also true when it comes to our Father in heaven. God accused His people in the days of Malachi of refusing to honor Him because they refused to honor His instructions (Malachi 1:6; 2:9). Jesus said in John 14:15, *“If you love me keep my commandments.”* And then, in 1 John 2:3,4 we read, *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”*

3) We must obey God in every area of life! The Bible insists that *“though Jesus was a son, yet He learned obedience...”* (Hebrews 5:8,9). We must cultivate the same spirit of obedience as well! This is true when it comes to our standards of personal conduct, to the way we worship and serve God in the church, and to what we do in order to become His child! In the final analysis, the degree of your respect and honor for God is measured precisely by the extent of your obedience!

It is important to have the right kind of relationship with our earthly fathers — it is far more important to have the right kind of relationship with our Father who is in heaven. Are you honoring God with your obedience to Him? †

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



There is an abundance of evidence to prove the value of physical exercise. For example:

- Walking can add to the length of your life. This enables you, at age 85, to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at \$5,000 per month.
- My grandmother started walking 5 miles a day when she was 70. She's now 76 and we don't know where in the world she is.
- Some folks have flabby thighs, but fortunately their stomach covers them.
- Long walks are very helpful, especially when they are taken by people who annoy you.
- If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.
- The advantage of exercising every day is that you die healthier.

Not everyone is really suited for the kind of work they do. That's certainly been true with me. I studied a long time to become a doctor, but I didn't have any patience. My best job was being a musician, but eventually I found I wasn't noteworthy. Then I became a professional fisherman, but discovered that I couldn't live on my net income. My last job was working at Starbucks, but I had to quit because it was always the same old grind.

So I retired and found I'm perfect for the job!



A tough old cowboy once counseled his grandson that the secret to living a long life was to sprinkle a pinch of gunpowder on his oatmeal every morning.

The grandson did this religiously and lived to the age of 110. He left 4 children, 15 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, 14 great-great-grandchildren, and a 50-foot hole where the crematorium used to be.



A little girl had just finished her first week of school. "I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother. "I can't read, I can't write, and they won't let me talk!"

PROVERBS 17:22

Advanced word studies have revealed that rearranging the letters in some words and phrases can be very meaningful. For example:

Dormitory: When you rearrange the letters it reads: **Dirty Room.**

The Morse Code: When you rearrange the letters it reads: **Here come dots.**

Eleven Plus Two: When you rearrange the letters it reads: **Twelve Plus One.**



A woman was trying hard to get the ketchup to come out of the jar. During her struggle the phone rang, so she asked her 4-year-old daughter to answer the phone.

The little girl answered the phone and then said, "It's the preacher, Mommy." She then spoke again to the preacher and said, "Mommy can't come to the phone to talk to you right now. She's hitting the bottle."



A recent widow told her close friend that she was broke. The friend asked, "How can that be? You told me your husband had \$20,000 just a few days before he died. How could you be broke?"

The widow replied, "Well, the funeral cost me \$6,500. And of

course I had to make the obligatory donation to the church, pay the preacher, and all of that. That was \$500, and I spent another \$500 for the wake, the food and drinks. The rest went for the memorial stone."

The friend asked, "You mean you paid \$12,500 for the memorial stone? How big was it?"

The widow replied, "Three carats."



Bill's barn burned down, and his wife Polly called the insurance company. She told the agent, "We had that barn insured for \$50,000, and I want my money."

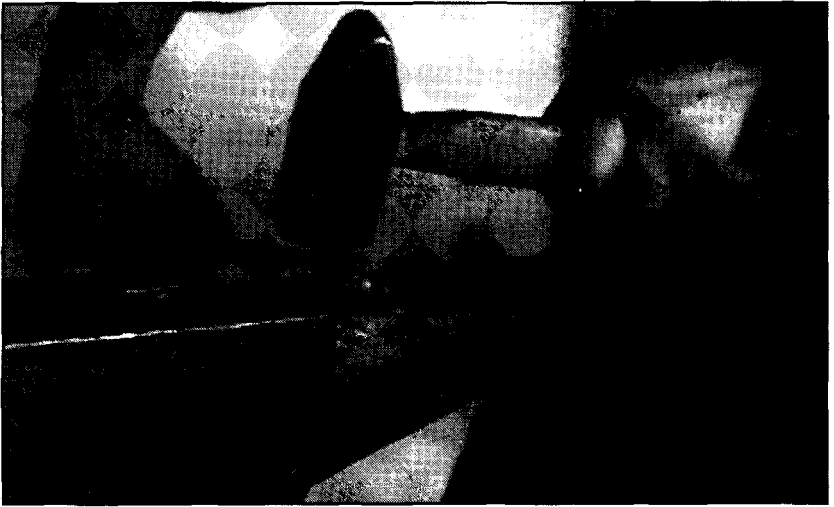
The agent replied, "Hold on just a minute, Polly. Insurance doesn't work quite like that. We will ascertain the value of what was insured and provide you with a new barn of comparable worth."

There was a long pause before Polly replied, "Then I'd like to cancel the policy on my husband."



On the first day of school, about midmorning, the kindergarten teacher said, "If anyone has to go to the bathroom, hold up two fingers."

A little voice from the back of the room asked, "How will that help?"



GOD'S REFINING SHOP

Allen Webster

“Why me, Lord?” We have all asked it. Why does it always have to rain on my parade? Why did this have to happen to me? Why my child? Why my marriage? Why my job? Why? Why? Why?

The answer may be found in an obscure Old Testament passage where God is pictured as sitting over a refiner's fire making silver of His people. Malachi wrote: “*And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness*” (Malachi 3:3).

A woman read this verse in Bible class and was curious enough to seek out a silversmith to see what it meant. She found him sitting before a crucible, gazing intently into a boiling pot. She asked, “Do you have to sit here all the time or just come back when it's finished?” He replied, “I have to keep my eye on the crucible. If it gets too hot, the silver is injured. I know the process of purifying is completed when I see my own image reflected in the silver.”

The answer to “why me?” is found in the silversmith's shop.

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

THE REFINER'S POT

God values us far more than a prospector does his "mother lode", a miser does his coins, an addict does his fix, or a mother does her newborn (Psalm 116:15; Isaiah 43:4). He wants the best *for* us and demands the best *of* us. Just as the refiner's job is to increase the value of his product by removing impurities, God sees His job as removing the impurities — sin — from us.

What kind of furnace does the Refiner use? He uses the furnace of all the problems common to humanity: affliction, physical injury, disease, prolonged sickness (2 Corinthians 12:7,8), difficulty in rearing our children, problems with parents, financial reverses, or other overwhelming cares of life. Such suffering is an effective teacher in the great school of life. Some important lessons are learned only at her feet.

Robert Browning Hamilton wrote:

**I walked a mile with Pleasure,
She chattered all the way;
But left me none the wiser,
For all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow
And ne'er a word said she;
But, oh, the things I learned
from her
When Sorrow walked with me!**

At the same time, God watches to see that the fire never gets so hot that it injures us. "*There hath no*

temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). These things hurt us — but they do not permanently injure us — unless we turn from the Refiner. What comfort it should be to know that God uses life's adversities with purpose, bringing good to our lives out of trouble (Romans 8:28).

THE REFINER'S PURPOSE

Amy Carmichael wrote, "A wise master never wastes his servant's time." No matter what set of circumstances we receive, God is not wasting our time. He is educating us; He is improving us; He is molding us. A young woman was suffering greatly and confided to an older Christian friend: "If God loves me as you say He does, why did He make me so?" The older woman replied, "He is making you now." God's purpose is to prepare us for heaven.

The Refiner wants to make heaven attractive to us (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1; Philippians 1:21-23; Hebrews 11:10; Colossians 3:1,2). One philosopher observed: "It is through our tears that we see the farthest into heaven." Hard times can build good character (James

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:7).

The Refiner wants to prove our faith (Genesis 22:1; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15). The worthiness of the ship is not determined while it rides at ease in the harbor but when it rides the waves of a storm. Our faith is worthless if it cannot get us through life's storms.

The Refiner wants to teach us to appreciate our blessings (Luke 17:17; Colossians 3:15). Domesticated bullfinches are placed in a dark room for several weeks before they learn to sing. When brought into sunlight, the bullfinch's song is sweeter and more beautiful than it otherwise would be. God often takes us into a dark room of suffering so that when we come back into life's sunshine, our song of praise will be sweeter than ever before.

The Refiner wants us to learn to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). It is difficult to really feel compassion for someone if we don't know what he is going through. But when we have "walked a mile in his moccasins", we can feel sorrow for the one with blisters

Suffering can help us help others. One remarked, "I asked for health that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might do better things."

The Divine Refiner wants us to learn to trust Him (Luke 14:11; Proverbs 16:18; James 4:10; Jere-

miah 10:23; 2 Corinthians 12:9). Abraham Lincoln said, "I have often been driven to my knees by the sincere conviction that there was nowhere else to go."

THE REFINER'S PRODUCT

As the refiner told the Bible-class student, silver is ready when he sees his image in its reflection. God also looks to see His image in our lives. Paul wrote, "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 3:18; cf. Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10).

A silversmith may make many pieces over the course of his days, but only a few of them are deemed worthy of display in his house. God is fashioning of us what He wants to display in His own house.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was once approached by a concerned and inquiring person who said, "Mr. Emerson, they tell me that the world is coming to an end." Emerson calmly replied, "Never mind, we can get along without it."

When God finishes refining us, we all will be very happy "doing without" this world and its suffering. †

Allen Webster works with the *House to House* publication of the church of Christ in Jacksonville, Alabama, USA. This article first appeared in that publication.

While doing mission work in Greece, I worked with the largest prison complex of the country, located near Athens. Once I presented a lesson on the different kinds of prisons and prisoners existing in the world. Little did I know of the warm reception I would receive an hour later.

The inmates who were incarcerated behind iron bars, were there because of serious violations of the law. But during the discourse of my sermon, I pointed out that there were thousands of people walking free in the megapolis of Athens who, though free so far as iron bars were



Release from Your Prison

Mike Sinapiades

concerned, nevertheless were prisoners. Those sitting at the very front rows of the auditorium captured my attention, as a great question mark was painted all over their faces. How could a person be free, outside the prison cell, and yet be a prisoner?

Do you remember what the apostle Paul stated? *"...but I am carnal, sold under sin... O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this*

death?" (Romans 7:14b, 24). Who among us cannot relate to this fact? For before we were delivered from the bonds of sin through Jesus Christ, all of us were enslaved and kept prisoners to some carnal sin. Who among us, while wallowing in the contaminated waters of transgression, were not descending deeper to the point that we were unable to be released? Sin has power, and a power which slips upon us so cun-

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

ningly and deceitfully that finally we are so entangled that there is no way to go but down.

Throughout the ages, the devil has continued to use all kinds of enticing methods to capture and enslave mankind. The love of money, one of his most often used baits, has imprisoned people through the lotteries, casinos and “work-holism”.

Drunkenness, which has split families and filled our highways with innocent blood, is an addictive vice and is difficult to quit.

Look what is happening with the various narcotics. Young and old alike become enslaved, resorting to crime to find money to support their uncontrollable habits.

their victims. Though these tools of Satan have not brought their prisoners behind iron bars, nevertheless, their incarceration is real.

Sin, which enslaves the inner man first and then takes over our entire lives, can be stamped out *only* by the King of kings who has the power to grant us pardon and freedom. Even Paul, realizing that he was subject to sinfulness, confessed, “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death! Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 7:24,25).

The apostle of love wrote, “*For whosoever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even*

FREEDOM FROM THE PRISON OF SIN COMES ONLY BY THE BLOOD OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Sexual promiscuity is the order of the day, to the extent that we are murdering innocent unborn lives by the millions because irresponsible adults want the thrill of illicit relationships but not the resulting consequences.

On the “respectable” side, we have such prison bars as uncontrollable anger, vicious gossip, lying, cheating, and stealing. Many more sins can be mentioned whose enslaving powers tenaciously hold

our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Our faith is the connecting link with Jesus and His blood. We are not saved by the accumulation of our good deeds, even though good deeds in the Name of the Father are expected from every Christian. **We are saved and are released from the enchaining power of sin by the Lord Jesus.** Freedom from the prison of sin comes *only* by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his Hebrews letter, Paul wrote this

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

sublime promise of God: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). How is this possible? The apostle John spells it out for us in a way that none can misunderstand: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin.... If we keep on confessing our sins, He is

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to keep on cleansing us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7,9). Though these awe-inspiring words were directed toward Christians, any person who will accept Jesus and surrender his life to Him can receive remission of sins and, by His power and guidance, he can be released from his prison. †

Mike Sinapiades works with the Lord's church in Jacksonville, Arkansas, USA.

The Link and the Chain

It is said that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. Paul told the Ephesian church to "... be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Why? "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:10-18). True strength comes from learning God's word and obeying the truths therein. **Be a strong link, and the chain will take care of itself.** — Don Lee, Liberty Church of Christ, Dennis, MS, USA.

The Great Commission

In deep silence I sat down to think and meditate,
I thought of the great command of our Lord,
“If you love me,” said He, “keep my commandments.”
I reasoned within my mind if I have kept His commands;
Suddenly flashed in my mind the great commission.

On Sunday morning I stood on the pulpit and taught,
I delivered a powerful sermon that impressed people,
The saints of God were moved by my eloquence;
I got down from the pulpit and back to my seat,
Suddenly flashed in my mind the great commission.

I ate and communed with brethren at the Lord’s table,
I gave the winds a melodious and mighty song,
I dropped some money into the Lord’s treasury,
I felt elated, believing I have kept the Lord’s commands;
Suddenly flashed in my mind the great commission

The Lord said I should REACH OUT for lost souls;
I saw myself reaching IN to saved souls only;
Reach out and reach in are two distinct commands;
I saw myself rendering just partial obedience and
Suddenly flashed in my mind the great commission.

I went out in search of my daily bread;
I discharged my duties and mingled with lost people;
I was hurt by their use of vulgar and sarcastic words;
I did nothing to stop them but, sitting down to rest,
Suddenly flashed in my mind the great commission

In spite of the meritorious deeds I often do,
In spite of all the religious duties I perform,
In spite of my wealth of knowledge of the scriptures,
Wrapped in thought as to the command I disobey,
Suddenly flashed in my mind the great commission

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel;
As you go I will be with you always.”
In thought I became disquieted for my disobedience
I resolve to go with the Lord’s might
Glory and indescribable blessedness filled my soul.

“He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” —
“To obey is better than sacrifice” —
“If you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” —
“Woe is me if I preach not the gospel” —
These are words from the Holy Writ.

The great commission is the *greatest commission*,
That the saved will, in turn, save the unsaved;
The found seek and find the lost;
The old creature reborn as a new creature:
Destiny changed from hell to heaven.

You Christian, child of God, obey this commission
To share in the bliss accompanying obedience to it;
Think, I implore you, beloved brothers and sisters,
Do not just sing and *quote* the great commission
Until you are ready to sing the Gospel into the ears of the lost.

— F.O. Aniamalu, preacher of the Gospel in Anambra State, Nigeria.



Whose 1000-Year Reign?

Royce Frederick

We often hear people speak about "the 1000-year reign of Christ." The Bible does mention a 1000-year reign. But whose reign is it?

A 1000-year reign is mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6: *"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."*

This does not say Christ will reign 1000 years. Instead, it speaks about the reign of some people who were beheaded for Christ. Because of their faithfulness, they would be given a great honor: for 1000 years they would join Christ in His reign.

A similar reward awaits every

faithful Christian: *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"* (Revelation 3:21); *"...His servants shall serve Him...the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever"* (Revelation 22:3,5).

How long is the reign of Christ? In Acts 2, Peter announced, *"...God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). He is now reigning over His kingdom, the church, and He will reign over it forever. His kingdom *"...shall stand forever"* (Daniel 2:44); *"...of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Luke 1:33).

At the end of the world, Christ will deliver His kingdom to God (I Corinthians 15:24). But that does not mean Christ will stop reigning. His kingdom is *"...the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:11). He and God the Father will reign forever on "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1,3). †

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

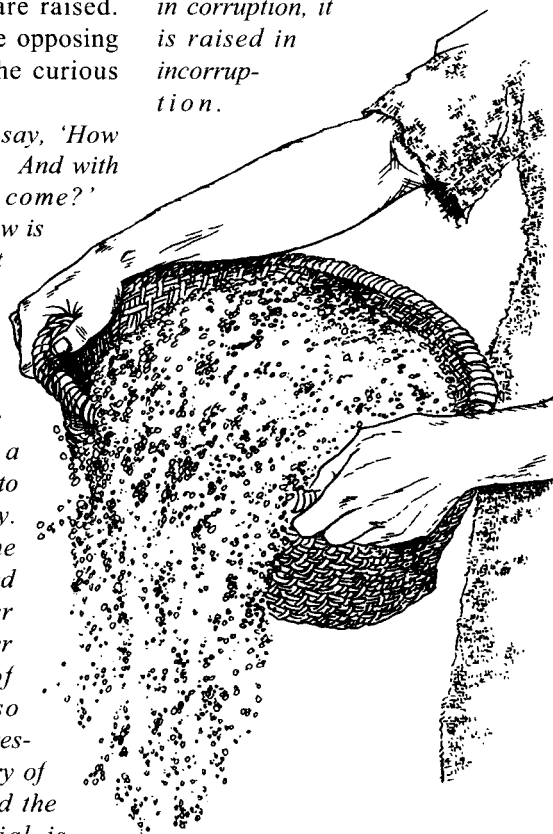
How Are the Dead Raised Up?

Charles Box

Some who doubt the resurrection ask, "How are the dead raised up?" This question may include: (1) a question as to what power is great enough to raise the dead, (2) and a question of what the dead would be like if they are raised. One is a question of the opposing doubter; the other of the curious doubter.

"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?' Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain — perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is

another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.



BIBLE QUESTIONS

It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body ... Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:13-50).

How are the dead raised up?

By the power of God. The same power which allows a grain to die and come to life to produce a harvest can raise up the dead body. The power of God brings forth the grain to new life. The grain has to die to live; just so, after death follows real life for a Christian. It is foolish to question God's power to make dead things live. He does it every day!

How are the dead raised up? They are raised with a glorious body. Just as God gives the grain a body according to His will, at our resurrection God will give us a glorified body which will please Him. Burying the dead is like sowing a seed which God will cause to spring forth. The resurrection will be to glory. *"It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in*

power" (1 Corinthians 15:43). When physical death comes, the poor, helpless body is laid in the earth. At the resurrection, a powerful heavenly body will come forth (1 John 3:1-2).

The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible and cannot be entered by flesh and blood, our natural body. So at the resurrection God will give us that glorious body fitted for our eternal inheritance. Are you preparing for heaven? †

Charles Box preaches for the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

A Grain of Wheat

Except a grain of wheat should die,
It remains alone, a single grain,
Except we put our Self to death,
We cannot our Lord's harvest gain.

He lived, He loved, Gave All for us,
So planted He His "Grain of Corn,"
For Him, for us the harvest comes,
For death has died and Life is born.

Jesus urges us to follow,
To bear much fruit, which shall remain,
We need not suffer Calvary;
We only need to plant one grain.

— Carlton Elkins



Be Spiritual

Malcolm Parsley

After a lengthy and well received discussion on mission work by a mission professor who had spent many years in the field, a student came forward and said, "Pardon me, Professor, but after hearing all you had to say, I have but one question. What is the most important thing I can do to prepare to be the missionary you have so emotionally described?" The professor answered simply, "Be Spiritual!"

I believe above all that could have been said, this is the most important point of emphasis if one is contemplating giving his or her

life to the service of others.

Spirituality is the art of training oneself to empty oneself of all that attracts and distracts from having a heart devoted to the spiritual. Spirituality is the state of having grown in one's understanding of life to the point of realizing that there is no value in the material, physical, and temporal things around man; that the only thing of real value is that which relates to truth, Godly righteousness, and all that is eternal.

Once one realizes this spirituality in his very soul, he sets out to

ETHICS

evaluate all he thinks, plans, and hopes, desiring to have eternal results that will lead to the pleasure of God. He becomes *soul* conscious, no longer *people* conscious. He is concerned about the welfare of the man *inside* and is less focussed on the number in Sunday morning attendance. He is not anxious concerning what people think about him except that they see the Christ that dwells within him. He is not concerned about the amount of his salary but rather about sharing what he has with those in need. He cares little about what he cannot remedy but looks for that which can be soothed, loved, corrected, or made better.

As he has daily given himself more and more to the welfare of others, his focus has ceased to be on himself. He cares little about receiving the respect of others, personally, but he longs for them to respect the truths he proclaims. He wants no titles but sees himself as "the slave of Christ", for in this role he has found the joy of being the humble servant.

No one can intrude on the time of the person who is spiritually mature, for his time has already been dedicated to whomever God may send his way as an opportunity to serve. He has nothing that he has already not given to any person who might need it.

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

To such a man, **the Word of God is the source of his ethics and morals.** He does as little as possible without first checking for direction in the Master's word. What he does is anchored in his determination to dedicate his entire life solely to that which will bring eternal results.

The spiritual man is not as concerned about matching the colors of his clothes as he is about matching the souls around him with the kind of life God requires for eternal sal-

The spiritual man, living by God's standard of ethics and values, is ready to lend to the needy, and because he had already given all that he has and is to God, he does not expect it back. One cannot offend him personally for he has pre-determined that regardless of what man may do to him, he asks God to forgive them before they even complete the act. Not even a dirty look in the way of revenge is in his possession, for he has turned all revenge over to God, under-

ETHICS

standing that that is God's role, not his. He has been freed from the desire to retaliate and to hate, and he thanks God for that freedom.

For the spiritual man, the pains of life are not from hunger or his own hurts but from seeing in his mind the future of those who reject God and who treat Him, His way, His children, and His creation with disdain and disrespect.

The man whose focus is on spiritual things has few joys greater than a bit of wisdom, wit, or wishes he finds in God's Word. Every new understanding of truth with which he is enlightened brightens his life until the next one comes along. His daydreams are long past, for now he meditates on a throne so bright he can't even look upon it with his mind's eye. He envisions the streets of gold and the river of life. He thinks of his friends who have gone on and of the joy of those he has known, confident that he will meet them again in that new world.

His soul fathoms as best it can the ecstasy of the eternity of his life amidst the peace and exhilaration of being in the presence of all truths as they harmoniously flow in attunement in the hearts

of each and all who will be there. The mere meditation of his mind lifts him above the mundane world around him and he, for but a moment, lives in a glimpse of immortality. This becomes his purpose, his strength, and the blessed goad that prods him on to more and greater spirituality. His realm is far above that which surrounds his body. He lives in the knowledge that he is God's. His faith is unquenchable and his dedication is unalterable. Like his Father, he is spiritual. †

Malcolm Parsley has served as a missionary in Seoul, South Korea for many years.

The Saved Life

**Trusting, loving, serving God,
Walking where our Master trod,
Climbing higher day by day,
Sowing seed along the way,
Praising Him whose blood redeems,
Countering satanic schemes;
Hope has reached a sin-cursed race,
Lost ones learn of saving grace.**

**A better way to live and learn,
Grace and peace and truth discern;
Nobler standards to live by,
Well-prepared to live or die,
Not deceived by earthly lures,
Faith and hope of heart endures;
This is what our Lord has brought;
This is what His death has wrought.**

— Ardron Hinton

She very casually asked the questions and typed my answers on the medical form, seemingly oblivious to the contradiction between her work and her appearance. On this winter day, her blouse was a

Earlier I had read that Muslim men attending universities in western cultures had been so sickened by what they had seen among women, and in the decadent populace as a whole, that they often went

What Are We —our Nation, and the Church — Doing to Ourselves?

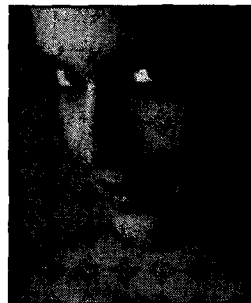
Betty Burton Choate

sweater, unbuttoned to the point of indecency and pulled aside to expose the greater part of her shoulders. In an effort not to see, I turned my eyes toward the door and the parade of people in the busy hallway. Repeatedly, the women who passed were wearing the same low-cut style of clothes.

I remembered reading an article by Dinesh D'Souza in which he said, "... why [are] the Islamic radicals fighting against America? From the perspective of Bin Laden and his allies, the war is between **the Muslim-led forces of monotheism and morality** against **the America-led forces of atheism and immorality**. Secularism, not Christianity is responsible for producing a blowback of **Muslim rage**."

back to their own countries with a new attitude of support for *sharia* (Muslim) law.

Looking around at the provocative dress of the average woman, I also felt sickened and ... *betrayed*. How can women so cheapen themselves by their indecent dress that on-lookers automatically conclude that they have no values or morals, that they are saying, by their dress, that they are there for the taking? What has woman-kind come to, that WOMEN would malign the



ETHICS

entire female gender by their cheap, tawdry, promiscuous behavior and dress? I am of the generation in which women were respected, protected, treated with consideration and gentleness — the “ladies first” mentality. How our world has changed, through the “progress”



resulting from the feminist movement!

And as women have gone, so has gone the entire western culture. “Wildness” would best describe much behavior today. Have you seen the pictures of teenage girls kicking, hitting, tearing out hair, attacking each other over some boy?

Did you see the film of teenagers running wildly into fences, tearing them down, and enjoying the thrill of being destructive while living dangerously, physically? Did you hear about the “hazing” at a college where a young man was

beaten so badly with a stick that he had to be hospitalized?

Are you keeping up with the reports of child pornography, of internet sites of sickening pedophilia, and of every other kind of perverted behavior? Did you see where millions of tax dollars were spent in support of the “Sundance Film Festival” in which there was a film depicting the rape of a 12-year-old girl, and another depicting bestiality?

Were you aware of the class of third-graders that was subjected to a film promoting homosexuality, and did you know that in some pre-



schools in this country there are sex “classes”. It’s not enough that the adult population is being destroyed by the atheistic/humanistic agenda; they are robbing even our babies of their innocence, twisting and perverting their minds before they are old enough to think for themselves.

Go down the list. What is

ETHICS

counted as “off-limits” today? Children grow up using curse words as a normal part of their language because those are the expressions they hear on every side. And even on cable “news” programs, where one would expect a degree of dignity and careful selection of words, men and women freely discuss together any part of the body and any act, with no restraints. There are also no restraints about the kind of lewd jokes in stand-up comedy, and no restraints about the immoral stories shown on TV.



Alcohol is destroying homes and lives every day. What is the prescribed remedy? A designated driver to get the drunk friends home safely! Every city is cursed with the scourge of drugs, and the resulting crime: robbery, murder, drug-dealing, suicide, rape. Those involved in selling or taking drugs live on the edge of death every day; non-participants in the neighborhood live in

fear of their lives because of the criminal and unpredictable behavior of the drug pushers and users.

Every year we hear a report of how much money the casinos have taken in here in Mississippi, an indication of how much tax revenue the state will get from this profitable business. But how many stop to think that every dollar those businesses **take in** is money **taken out** of the pockets of families, often resulting in deprivation of food and clothes, in the loss of a car, a home, in bankruptcy, even in suicide?

Have you heard that there are more “single parent” families and more “live in” situations now than there are traditional “husband/wife” families? Did you know that only 1 in 20 births in the 1960’s (when women behaved in such a way as to be respected) were to unwed mothers, and there was great family shame? That percentage has jumped to 4 out of 10 births now, with little shame felt by anyone! Among Blacks, 7 out of 10 births are to unwed mothers; among Hispanics, 5 out of 10. As the divorce rate has soared, live-in situations, out-of-wedlock births, and a plethora of



resulting problems have also grown.

What is the projected future for these babies? One report says, **“Children born to unmarried mothers are more likely to grow up in a single-parent household, experience instability in living arrangements, live in poverty, and have socioemotional problems.** As these children reach adolescence, they are more likely to have **low educational attainment, engage in sex at younger ages, and have a premartial birth.** As young adults, children born outside of marriage are more likely to be **idle (neither in school nor employed), have lower occupational status and income, and have more troubled marriages and divorces** than those born to married parents.” Not a pretty picture, is it?

What we see in much of the western “culture” is *unrestrained wildness*. Built into such sinful behavior are consequences. Alcohol and drugs destroy health and lives; promiscuity results in venereal disease; homosexuality breeds AIDS; immorality and infidelity cause broken homes and scarred children.

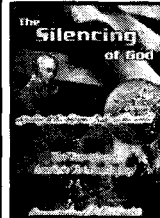
Sin curses whatever it touches, and a great portion of our population is in a **downward spiral of self-induced destruction.** They are sick — sick — and many are too blind to know it.

On the other side of this great cultural divide is a seeming grow-

ing hunger for spiritual things, especially among the younger generation. According to recent statistics, **“sixty-two percent identify a decline in moral values as one of the major causes of our problems today.”** High on the list of concerns is the desire of young Americans to give their mates and children more stable family lives than their baby-boomer parents gave them.

Since the accelerated take-over of America’s educational and judicial institutions in the latter half of the 20th century by the **atheistic/humanistic** powers-that-be, we have seen an increasing war aimed at erasing the Christian heritage of our country. “Freedoms” and “rights” are being used to destroy us.

How will we, as a nation, respond? *Will the desire of half the people to uphold God overcome the other half that is sold out to Satan?*



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*Part Two****The Church — The War Within***

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

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

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

But what is happening to the church now? We are engaged in a tragic war — a divide that will have long-lasting effects on our impact in the world. On the one hand, great vision is enabling tremendous programs of work: **Gospel Broadcasting Network** has set its sights on tak-

ing the Gospel to the entire world through satellite television. Many, many web sites sponsored by the church on the internet carry articles and broadcasts to the masses. Telecasts and radio programs such as "**In Search of the Lord's Way**", "**Restoration Radio Network**", "**Bible Talk**", "**The Treasure of Truth**" bring the Gospel to millions every day. The bi-monthly evangelism paper, "**House to House**" reaches more than two million homes. "**World Video Bible School**" "**World English School**", and "**World Bible School**" are avenues for teaching masses throughout the world, and "**The Voice of Truth International**" goes to many mission fields. Certainly, not since the first century have churches of Christ worked with such vision and commitment to obey the command to evangelize the world through mass media.

Today there would be **more Christians outside the US than in this country**. In most cases, these are the products of American missionaries and American dollars. Countless Christians here have sacrificed greatly to make that work possible. Radio, TV, literature programs, colleges, training schools, orphanages, benevolent works in the

ETHICS

wake of disaster have reaped great harvests. Always, more work must be done, but there are strong, well-grounded churches in many countries of the world.

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

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

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

Tragically, it would seem that the purpose for preserving America may be vanishing. Tragically, it would seem that the Lord's church herself is betraying her God, just as Israel did in turning from truth to worship according to the religions of those around her. "*An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: The **prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power [Apostasy]; And My people love to have it so....***" (Jeremiah 5:30,31)

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

*"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the **old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.**' But they said,*

ETHICS

'We will not walk in it.' Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, **'We will not listen.'** [Apostasy]

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

"Behold, a people comes from the north country; ... They are cruel and have no mercy; ... As men of war set in array against you, O daughter of Zion.

*"'We have heard the report of it; **Our hands grow feeble. Anguish has taken hold of us, Pain as of a woman in labor. Do not go out into the field, Nor walk by the way. Because of the sword of the enemy, Fear is on every side**' (Jeremiah 6:22-25).*

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

"... Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I WILL NOT HEAR YOU"
(Jeremiah 7:12-16).

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

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

Are we in such a downward spiral of evil that the only way to reverse it is through an Assyrian purging or a Babylonian captivity? *"Woe to Assyria,*

ETHICS

the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isaiah 10:5-7).

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

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

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

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

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

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

ETHICS

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

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

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

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

need to prepare our children.

In our world we are so schooled to “mind our own business” and we are so concerned about not being offensive that the “silent majority” usually avoids confrontations. I looked at the young lady at the hospital desk and concluded that it is high time for those of us who care to say something. So I asked her how she would feel if she was forced to wear the black burqua clothing of a Muslim woman or be stoned to death. Her face showed blank surprise.

I explained, “Muslims say that the immorality among American women is one reason they fight. We, as Americans, need to realize that there are repercussions for our behavior. The way you are dressed leaves an appearance of being immoral. But it’s not only you — most of the women walking up and down the hall are indecently dressed. We are responsible to God for the way we dress and the way we live. If we don’t listen to Him, we may be facing some terrible consequences.” I gave her a tract about salvation and thanked her, inviting her to visit the church in the area and to study with them about these things. As I turned to go, she was buttoning her sweater. †

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate, editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

The Sojourner Mission

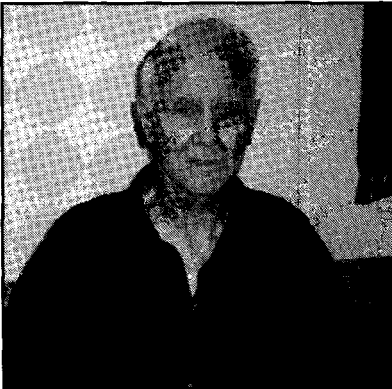
Perry Hall

*"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap,
but by the seeds you plant."*

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Have you ever had a longing to do mission work, but were prohibited from fulfilling that desire because of your life's work and family responsibilities? If you are approaching your retirement years, there is a wonderful opportunity available to you to make that dream a reality.

Perhaps you have never heard of a group of retired people in the Lord's church called "Sojourners".



Paul Scott, founder of Sojourners, is now living in a rest home in Searcy, Arkansas.

National Evangelism With Sojourners (NEWS) was begun by two people, Paul and Peggy Scott. They had a dream to help small struggling churches throughout the United States. As a career naval man, Paul had had the opportunity to assist and encourage many congregations throughout his military service. Later they were assisted by Marvin and Linda Hall. In 1978, these two couples held the first evangelistic workshop in Weslaco, Texas.

This growing effort is presently comprised of approximately 800 New Testament Christians from all parts of the U. S. and from all walks of life. They are bound together by their love for the Lord and their dedication in teaching the truth and reaching the lost with the Gospel of Christ, along with helping the weak, the homeless, and all who need encouragement.

As a volunteer group, Sojourners do not receive any monetary compensation for the work they do.

FROM THE HEART OF ...

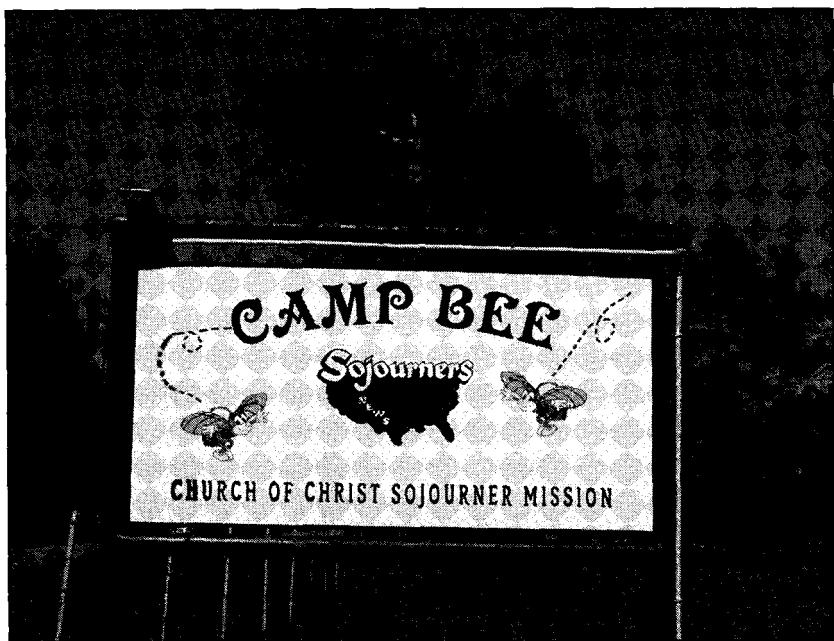
They are self-supporting, traveling in their own RV's, and working in groups of four to eight couples. Sojourners go only where there is a request from small churches, children's homes, youth camps, and some Christian colleges. Their work, in addition to the main thrust of evangelism, consists of all kinds of physical labor, i.e., work and repair on church buildings and preachers' homes, cleaning and repairing camp grounds for summer youth camps, various jobs that create a better home environment for children deprived of normal parental care, vacation Bible schools, gospel meetings, ladies' days, listening lab workshops, marriage and grief seminars, personal

work classes, along with scheduling and teaching home Bible studies that are set up as a result of door-knocking efforts. It is the aim of evangelistic sojourners to personally contact every home in every city where it is possible. When people are not at home, teaching materials are left at the door. We plant, we water, and know it is God who gives the increase.

Along with the realization one can remain active and productive in the Lord's work, even into old age (our oldest sojourner is 90), there is the blessing of Christian fellowship, making new friends from Alaska to Florida, from California to Maine, from Hawaii to Ohio, traveling all over this beautiful country, and



There are four workshops held in the US each year.



Camp Bee, Sojourner Headquarters in Marshall, Texas.

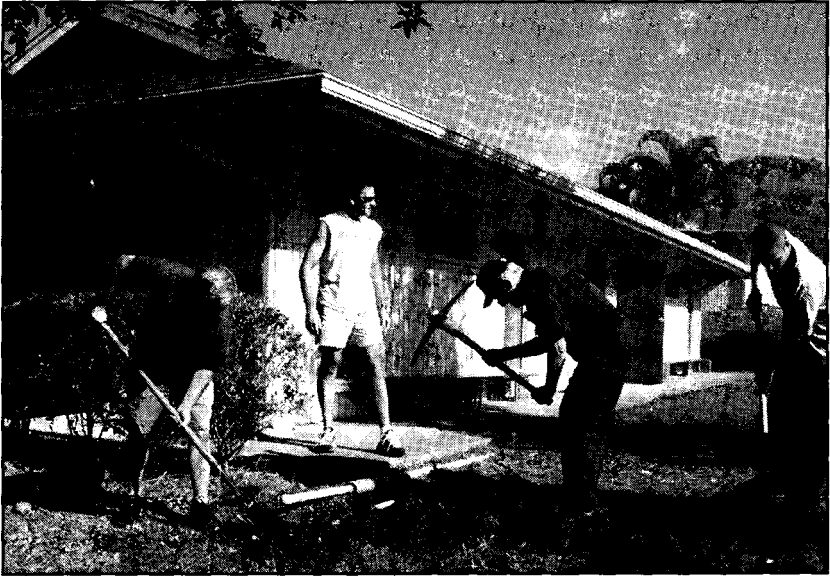
even working in some foreign countries, such as Scotland, England, Germany, and Austria.

When one looks for ways to spend the retirement years, many people think only of fishing, golfing, leisure, entertainment, or recreation. These things can be good but, as Christians, we should all be more concerned with how we can continue to bring glory to God and salvation to the lost in our twilight years. Jesus said, *"Let us work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day, for the night is coming when no man can work"* (John 9:4).

The Sojourner office, which is housed at Camp Bee in Marshall, Texas, is staffed throughout the year with voluntary women office workers, along with six co-directors who are available each month on a rotating basis for consultations and questions. The office hours are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The telephone numbers are (903) 935-5742 or (903) 935-7352. The address is: Church of Christ Sojourner Mission, Camp Bee, 5554 Cooks Road, Marshall, TX 75670-9130.

While each individual remains

FROM THE HEART OF ...



Digging a water line for preacher's home in Hawaii.

under the oversight of his/her own local elders, the Sojourner work itself is under the oversight of the elders of the Eastern Hills congregation in Marshall, Texas. To become a sojourner, you must be a faithful member of the church of Christ, desiring to spread New Testament Christianity; present a letter of recommendation from the elders of your home congregation telling of your work and service in your home congregation; and answer a brief questionnaire from the Sojourner office. You must own an RV and be able to support yourself in this work of the kingdom by participating in at least one sojourn a year, in

order to remain on the active list. Workshops are available in four states to help you grow in your service to God as a sojourner, one who is first and foremost a faithful Christian!

Many sojourners are single, and some have even found new mates after having lost their previous mate. If you, as an individual or as a couple, want to know more about this joyful and fulfilling work, please call or contact the Sojourner office. If you wish to request an effort in your city, please call the office for a request form. †

Perry Hall lives in Tyler, Texas, and is a Co-director of Sojourners.

FROM THE HEART OF ...

My Experience with the Sojourners

Carroll Sites

Even though I am not an “official member” of the group called Sojourners, it has been a privilege and blessing for my wife Sarah Loreta and me to work with them in seven campaigns. Five were evangelistic campaigns in which I did the preaching. One was a teaching campaign for four days and nights in which an attempt was made to prepare the congregation to select and appoint elders. One was an evangelistic campaign at the con-

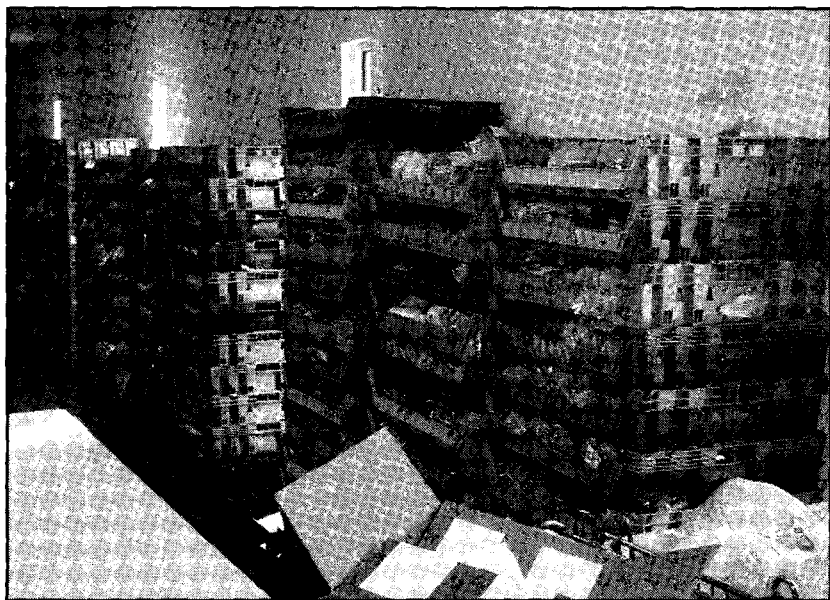
gregation where I serve as local evangelist and one of five elders. Six of these congregations had attendance figures from 35 to 50 at their Lord’s Day service. One had average attendance of about 85. In the campaigns, there was a total of 15 baptisms and 4 Christians restored to their first love.

The Sojourners worked for the first week knocking doors and setting up and conducting Bible studies with people. The preaching part of



Sojourners are self-supporting, traveling in their own RV's.

FROM THE HEART OF ...



Sojourners helped to distribute food in Floresville, Texas.

the campaign began on the second Sunday and was conducted for a set time — usually four or five nights. During the second week of the campaign, the Sojourner team continued to do *follow-up work with the contacts* made the first week. We also continued to knock doors.

Many things have impressed me in working with these “retired” Christians living in their home-away-from-home (their recreational vehicles), namely, their deep personal conviction in the power of the gospel of Christ to convict and convert the lost, their love for lost souls with a longing desire to see them

converted, and the expenditure of their own finances and personal energy in seeking the lost. They are a deeply committed group of people who are sincerely interested in the church and lost souls.

From the daily devotionals to the nightly preaching services, it has been a genuine joy to be associated with these good people in the greatest work on the face of this earth — the seeking and saving of the lost. May God bless them and give us more of their kind. †

Carroll Sites preaches for the church in Higden, Arkansas, USA.

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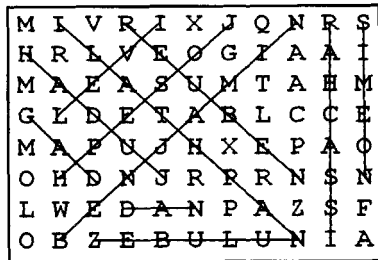
ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from page 24)

1. No.
2. It is based upon truth.
3. No one will escape judgement.
4. God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering.
5. A person's hard and impenitent heart.
6. All will be judged according to his or her own deeds.
7. Evil doers are separated from those who do good.
8. Sinners without the law are Gentiles. Those who have the law are Jews.
9. Doers of the law are the ones justified in God's sight.
10. Yes.
11. Yes.
12. All men will be judged through Jesus Christ according to His gospel.

Bible Find

(from page 75)



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