

VOLUME SIXTY-TWO

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



IN THE HEART OF...

UKRAINE

PAGE 100

GOD'S WORD IS PRECIOUS.



If we could see our lives as God sees them, how many of the best roads did we miss or refuse to take because they were not what we expected, and we did not recognize them as being given by God?

But, desiring to work with us, He patiently opened other paths and helped us to make the best possible use of them . . . because

It's an Interesting Thought

Betty Burton Choate

we are His children and He will use us, in whatever ways we will allow.

At the end of the road, only God can know how much we denied ourselves by our lack of faith, or lack of vision, or lack of submission.

And only God can know how much we grew beyond our own “born” potential because we put our hand in His and let Him lead, even when we could neither see nor understand.

Faith — It's a powerful tool in our hands and in God's hands

Romans 16:16 says,
“The churches of Christ greet you.”

Are you looking for *the church of Christ*?

How can you identify it?

by the building?

by the steeple?

by the large crowd? No

- * The sign outside the building will say
“Church of Christ” (if there is a building).**
- * The individuals will be called “Christians”.**
- * They will be following and teaching the Bible only; there is no “creed” written by men for churches of Christ.**
- * Adults are added to the church of Christ through:
(1) their faith in Christ (Hebrews 11:6),
(2) turning away from a life of sin (Luke 13:3),
(3) confessing their faith in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37),
(4) being buried in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Romans 6:1-6; Acts 22:16).**
- * Their worship will consist of:
(1) singing hymns (no accompanying instruments),
(2) praying to God in the name of Jesus,
(3) studying a lesson from God’s Word,
(4) partaking of the Lord’s Supper each first day of the week,
(5) contributing of their income for the work of God.**
- * They will be living faithful lives of obedience and service, following the example of Christ and early Christians, as recorded in the New Testament.**

Were you saved?

The way you would answer that question depends on what you were taught. Many “pastors” tell people, “Just give your heart to Jesus.” Others ask people to repeat “The Sinner’s Prayer”: “I believe that God for Christ’s sake has pardoned my sins.”

Some teach that it is good to be “baptized”, as a visual evidence of the “salvation” that happened at the point of belief: “an outward sign of an inward grace” is the terminology. Most teach that “baptism” can be an immersion in water, or the sprinkling or pouring of water on the head of the “saved” person. **What does the Bible say?**

To be sure that you have obeyed God, and that the salvation you “feel” you have is *real*, turn to the Scriptures to find the guidance for what *each one* of us must do in order to have our sins forgiven and, thus to be saved and to be added to the church of Christ (Romans 16:16):

*Now when they heard this, they were **cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**.*

*Then **those** who gladly received his word **were baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls **were added** to them. And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles’ doctrine** and **fellowship**, in the **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**.*

*And **the Lord added to the church** daily **those** who were **being saved** (Acts 2:37-47).*

Were you saved?

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



Religious Strictness

Byron Nichols

During a recent visit with a friend of mine, he referred to a religious group in our area that is considered to be rather quaint in their beliefs and practices. He then added something like this: “They are very strict, much like the ‘Church of Christ.’” I’m con-

fident that he didn’t say this as either a criticism or a compliment — it was merely his honest personal observation and assessment.

I have since thought about my friend’s comment several times. From my perspective, I certainly would not equate our beliefs and practices with those of the religious body to which he likened us. I believe that my friend lacks a sufficient understanding of the Lord’s church; otherwise, his assessment would be somewhat different from what he stated.

While my feelings were not all favorable with respect to my friend’s comment, I did feel good that he at least understands that the church of Christ does exercise some degree of religious strictness. I’m glad that he does not perceive us as teaching, endorsing, or condoning just any and every doctrine or practice that comes along. He knows that we are trying to adhere to what the Bible says, rather than polling the community or society in general prior to determining what we will sanction or approve. He sees that we are more restrictive and less moderate in our interpretation and application of the Scriptures than his own religious group.

Neither the church nor any individual Christian has authority to make any compromises relative to any commands or guidelines outlined in God’s Word. To be uncompromising in this regard should be viewed as commendable; however, it is not uncommon for such a stance to result in Christians (or the church as a whole) being classified as “hard-nosed” or “obstinate.”

Just a casual reading of the New Testament would be sufficient to reveal that the apostle Paul was definitely uncompromising, both before and after becoming a Christian. However, it is also evident that he was a very passionate and compassionate person. Please note an episode recorded in Acts chapter 20. Verses 17-38 record a meeting that Paul had with the elders of the church from Ephesus. Among other things, he tells them in verse 25 that they will not see him again during his or their lifetime. He then states, *“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”* (verses 26,27). Observation: Paul readily admits to having been uncompromising with respect to the faithful declaration of the **whole** (the **entire**) counsel (inspired Word) of God. This staunch proclaimer of the truth used some of his closing words to these church shepherds to warn that very soon various brethren, even some of them, would depart from the truth and bring in destructive heresies and perverse teachings (verses 28-30). Notice now the tenderness and compassion of Paul that is exposed in verse 31: *“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”* Surely we cannot fail to be drawn to the compassion and caring of this man of God who was also so unwilling to compromise God’s Word. He was unrelenting in faithfully preaching the will of God, but he also grieved deeply when others could not or refused to see the divine revelation. Those elders from Ephesus knew Paul well, and their reaction to what he said to them is recorded in verses 36-38: *“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”*

This look at Paul should serve as a pattern for the church in how to keep our “strictness” equivalent to that of God. We are not at liberty to either loosen or tighten the bonds of Scripture (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18,19). Paul declared that we are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), making it clear that attitude and motive are critically important in practicing religious strictness. This is further borne out by his inspired admonition in Galatians 6:1, *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”* Paul repeatedly teaches the necessity of our avoiding and calling attention to sinful practices, yet he never even hints that doing so with a belligerent manner is acceptable to the Lord.

May God help us to do our best to be strict to the same degree and in the same manner as commanded by the Bible and exemplified by Paul. †



Trembling at the Word of God!

Jerry Bates

In our modern world we normally think of trembling only when we are terrified, and certainly it is not good to be frightened to that extent. One would never think that we should tremble at God or His Word. After all, some would say, “God loves all of us, and we are His children.” Should a child tremble in the presence of his father? NO!

If we think of trembling in the sense of fear, then I would agree with the above sentiment. But there is another sense of trembling that is good. Notice the words of Isaiah in chapter 66, verse 2: *“But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”* Here we find some characteristics of that man with whom God has a special relationship. God is a God of the universe, but He will condescend to the depths of man if we are of a certain character. God does not dwell in temples made with hands but in certain human hearts.

First of all, we are to be of a poor and contrite spirit, that is, a humble spirit. God does not look with favor upon a man simply because he is poor, but He looks upon those with a humble spirit. He also wants us to have a contrite spirit. This is a spirit that is deeply affected by sin. It is the opposite of pride and self-righteousness. God wants us to wholly lean upon Him, realizing that without Him we are nothing.

Secondly, notice that God through Isaiah tells us that He wants us to “tremble” at His Word. Of course, God is not saying that we should literally tremble as we pick up the Bible to read it. He is referring to the sense of awe, respect and reverence we should have toward God and His Word. We do not add to or take away from what God has said (Revelation 22:18,19), and we should seek to obey it with all our hearts. That type of respect is sadly

lacking among most people, even among those who say they believe the Bible is God's Word. Many read and then go on to live their lives pretty much as they please. Most will try to hide their actions, and then if discovered, attempt to justify themselves in a number of ways. Excuses are offered in an effort to defend their behavior or at least to lessen the supposed severity of their offences. It seems that to most people, sin is not a big problem, and certainly not something about which we should be overly concerned.

The Word of God is our Authority and our Law to which we are amenable. God tells us that He expects us to obey it at all costs. Some would say they agree with that statement, but then they add a disclaimer saying that Christ died for us, hence we can have a right relationship without perfect obedience. They might also add that God knows we are weak, human creatures; therefore, God will excuse our failures and shortcomings. However, just because we can have our sins forgiven through Christ should not cause us to somehow forget the terrible nature of sin, to overlook the high price of sin that Christ paid, or to think that God is no longer interested in absolute obedience. It is a sad commentary upon our society when survey upon survey shows little difference in how a Christian and a non-Christian live their lives.

The humble and contrite heart is always going to deeply feel the pain of failing to live up to the standard that God desires of His children. When the apostle Peter denied Christ, doing the very thing that Jesus had just a few hours earlier predicted he would do, Peter did not try to justify it or think that it wasn't really his fault. Matthew 26:75 records simply that "*he went out and wept bitterly,*" indicating his genuine repentance. In Acts 8 we read about the conversion of a man, Simon the Sorcerer. Soon after his conversion, he sinned by trying to buy the power to pass the gift of the Holy Spirit on to other people, just like Peter had the power to do. In verse 22 Peter told him to "*repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.*" I suggest that there were several excuses Simon could have offered to lessen his guilt, the chief of which might be that he had been a Christian only a very short time. However, Simon presents no defense. He simply pleads, "*Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me*" (Acts 8:24). I can imagine the "trembling" as he spoke those words. The church needs more people who "tremble" at God's Word, servants who conform their lives as closely as possible to what God wants them to be. In addition, the church needs more members who genuinely repent when mired in sin, offering no excuse or defense, but simply asking forgiveness from God and others. Those are the ones God will bless. †



Christianity, Merely a Museum Piece?

Louis Rushmore

Either a real account or something that could have happened, a young lady touring England and Europe was shown a magnificent, very old cathedral. The tour guide probably expecting the tourists to whom he was speaking to be awed by the grandeur of the antique architecture was taken back when the young lady asked, “Yes, but when was the last time somebody was saved here?” Now there’s a young lady who was thinking, and more attuned in her thinking than customarily we are under similar circumstances. A church building where the saved do not assemble and where the unsaved are not saved is no more useful than a lighthouse that no longer shines its light upon the cragged shoreline to warn away ships from certain destruction. Such lighthouses and cathedrals are little more than museums, keeping alive the faint memory of yesteryear.

A few years ago when I preached a Gospel meeting in Wisconsin, Bonnie and I drove by a quaint, old, white wood-framed church building. It was in good repair, freshly painted and surrounded by immaculately groomed grounds. In its own right, this meetinghouse built in bygone days was worthy of memorializing by making a photograph of it. However, what caught my attention most was the signage it bore; rather than identifying a religious group meeting there from time to time, the sign simply read, “Museum.” Yes, I know that from a biblical perspective there is a difference between a meetinghouse and a church (an assembly), and a building as such could be used for about anything; it is not holy. Yet, a beautiful old church building bearing the large-lettered, one-word sign, “Museum,” seemed to make a much larger statement about the state of Christianity in America.

If the United States of America was ever a *Christian nation*, it is no longer a

Christian nation now. In the sense that legal encroachments throughout our country against Christianity and Bible believers are ever occurring of late, the powers that be in high places and low places are doing their best to stamp out Christianity from American life. In the sense that so-called Christians have so badly diluted their religious faiths that they often esteem anti-Bible doctrine (e.g., approval of homosexuality, etc.), Christianity in America is becoming a useless antique and merely a museum piece. To the extent that Christianity becomes merely a memory refreshed infrequently by visiting it in a museum will this or any country that does likewise become weak, and despised by God. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17).

Principles of Christianity made this nation great once. The Bible was the foundation of the legal system in our country. Common morality in days gone by was based squarely on the Bible. Unaware of biblical instruction and unimpressed with the very Word of God, citizens throughout our nation no longer feel ashamed irrespective of how repulsive by Bible standards their behavior may be.

“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” (Jeremiah 6:15).

Empty, echoing chambers in grandiose cathedrals, shuttered meeting-houses and frivolous, anti-biblical denominationalism relegate Christianity to being merely a museum piece. **Is Christianity for you just an old, useless antique, or are you simply and proudly a true Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)?** †

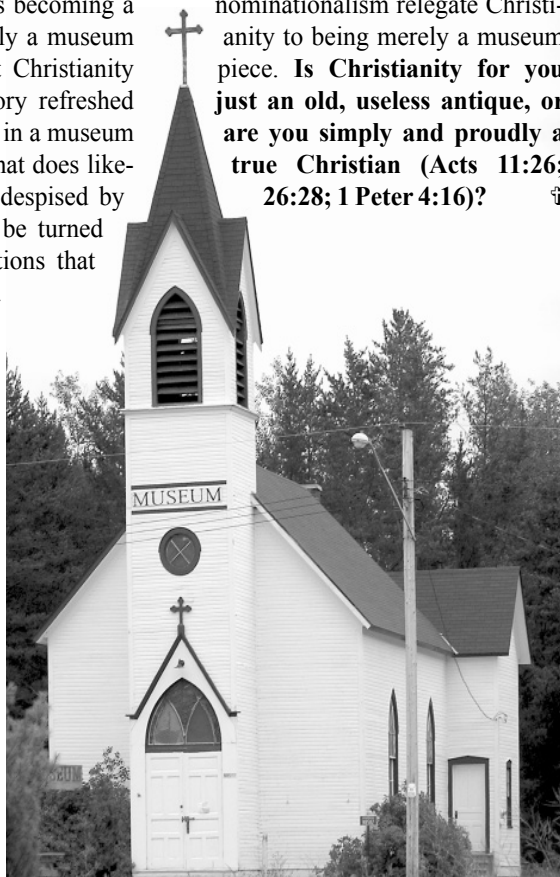


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The Goodness of God

Ken Tyler

The apostle Paul stated in Romans 2:4, “...*the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.*” “*We love him, because he first loved us*” (John 4:19). In this article, I want you to think carefully about the goodness of God.

1. The goodness of God is shown by the gift of His Son for mankind. Yes, John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*” Paul in speaking of this gift said, “*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift*” (2 Corinthians 9:15). Paul said that God’s gift of His Son for our sins is so wonderful and meaningful that it cannot be adequately described with words. It is an “...*unspeakable gift*”. God’s goodness is supremely seen by the gift of His Son for our sins. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. How thankful we should be!
2. The goodness of God is seen by the fact that He is no respecter of persons. All men are equal in God’s sight. It doesn’t matter whether we are rich or poor, black or white, or whatever. God loves all men and wants them to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter said at the house of the Gentile, Cornelius, “...*of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*” (Acts 10:34,35). Yes, God is impartial. This is a wonderful quality that manifests His goodness.
3. The goodness of God is seen by His mercy and care for us. In 2 Corinthians 1:3, God is described as “...*the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.*” These are marvelous statements that show God’s goodness. Peter wrote, “*casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). Where would we be without God’s mercy, concern, and kindness? We are told in Hebrews 13:5, “...*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*” What a wonderful promise!

I want to ask you, has the goodness of God led you to repentance? There’s no question about God’s goodness. Do you love Him because He first loved you? John said, “*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments...*” (1 John 5:3). Friends, the God of heaven is good. May we all gladly serve Him. †

Ken Tyler is a Gospel preacher working with the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

The Spirit Within Us

David Pharr

What is our relationship with the Holy Spirit in the present age? How does He dwell in us? How does He influence our lives?

There is perhaps more misunderstanding of these questions in the modern religious world than on any other subject. The views many hold are based more on emotion and superstition than on Scripture. It is important to let the Bible answer. This may necessitate your forgetting some of the ideas you have previously held.

First, remember that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, just as the Father and Christ are Divine Persons. With this in mind, remember that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — all three — are said to dwell in us (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 3:17; Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19). We know of the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit because we are told this in the Scriptures. Notice again that Christ dwells in us “*by faith*” (Ephesians

3:17). Now read Galatians 3:2. Here we learn that the Spirit is received by the “*hearing of faith*”. The simple fact is that we know the presence of the Holy Spirit in the same way that we know the presence of Christ and the Father. This is not by feelings and experiences, but by faith which is based on the statements of the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit instructs, guides, and influences us by means of the written Word of God. Jesus promised the Spirit to the apostles to guide them “*into all truth*” (John 16:13). The Word of God is the “*sword of the Spirit*” (Ephesians 6:17). Everything that the Spirit does in guiding, instructing, and influencing us is said to be done through the Word.

Read Ephesians 5:18,19 and Colossians 3:16. Notice the parallels between the two passages. Notice how one place says to be “*filled with the Spirit*” and the other place says to “*let the word of Christ dwell in us*”

GOD

richly.” The two statements mean the same thing. A person is under the influence of the Spirit when he is being guided by the Word.

The only meaningful evidence of the Spirit’s influence is in changed lives.

It is a dangerous mistake to expect the Spirit to instruct, influence, or guide us through some means other than the Bible. The Scriptures furnish us completely unto every good work (1 Timothy 3:16,17). When people imagine that the Spirit is leading them by some other means instead of the Scriptures, they come to ignore and even contradict the Word of God.

As we consider the influential power of the Spirit in our lives, there is one passage that we should especially learn — Galatians 5:22,23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The “*fruit*” the Spirit bears in our lives is “*love, joy, peace,*” etc. Notice the contrast in verses 19-21. The Spirit leads us through the Scriptures to avoid the sins of the flesh and to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The only meaningful evidence of the Spirit’s influence is in changed lives. It is not in feelings, ecstatic experiences, or emotional outbursts, but in whether a person’s life is characterized by the fruit described.

First Corinthians 6:18-20 shows a powerful motivation for purity. When we realize the presence of the Holy Spirit (as the Bible tells us), we recognize how important it is to keep ourselves from fornication and any other sin that defiles the “*temple of the Holy Spirit*”.

David Pharr is the Editor of *Carolina Messenger* and works with the Charlotte Avenue Church of Christ in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.

ANCIENT DOCUMENTS

Donald R. Fox

Bart D. Ehrman is an agnostic. He is highly critical of the Word of God and believes that the Bible is a work of mere men and not the revealed will of God. In believing this, he rejects and belittles the Bible. He has authored twenty plus books that advance his agnostic beliefs. “He joked that atheists think agnostics are wimpy atheists and that agnostics think atheists are arrogant agnostics.” It is my opinion that Mr. Ehrman is an arrogant agnostic.

I noticed in the 30th of March 2009 edition of *Newsweek* magazine a very short article that publicized Mr. Ehrman’s latest book, “Jesus, Interrupted”. Found on page 16, the article is entitled, “Dear Lord, Let’s Agree To Disagree” by Adam B. Kushner. Under the subtitled, “The Evidence”, Mr. Kushner writes in part concerning the New Testament, “Most of the 27 books were written long after Christ’s death, and only eight of them were actually written by the people initially credited as authors. When the New Testament became canonical, there were lots of Gospels floating around. Why did some endure but not others? ‘Unclear’ Ehrman writes, but it surely reflected contemporary biases.” The Bible “did not descend from on high,” he writes. “It was created, down here on earth.”

All of Mr. Ehrman’s critical remarks have been answered over and over again by true biblical scholars. Concerning his claim, “there were lots of Gospels floating around,” this is not true! Notice following evidence, “Though a few of the Apocryphal Gospels are of comparatively early origin, there is no evidence that any Gospels purported to be what our four Gospels are, existed in the first century, or that any other than fragmentary literature of this character existed even in the second century.” (Pages 349-350, Volume 8, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Introductory Notice to Apocrypha of the New Testament, by Professor M.B. Riddle, D.D.)

We have always wondered why these Bible haters have ignored ancient documents/evidences that are available. Maybe they would rather put forth their agnostic/atheistic agenda to the public without addressing such works in an honest and open manner. This is deceitful! Notice from the classic work of Irwin H. Linton, “A Lawyer Examines The Bible,” extracted portion from his “Appendix “C,” entitled, “Ancient Documents,” pages 228-229 as follows: “In regard to the books which make up the New Testament, it is obvious that

EVIDENCES

they had to be written by someone before they could be quoted by anyone, and since we find them cited, quoted, listed, catalogued, harmonized, by men of the second century, some of whom were Christians, and others of whom were pagans (like Celsus, who was born only fifty years after the death of the Apostle John, and who wrote vigorously against the Christian faith and used very much the same arguments in his attack as are used by his two-thousand-years-later successors), we know for a certainty that the New Testament books, and more specifically the Gospels, which Celsus quotes, were written by men who lived at or about the time of the events recorded, or in some portion of the first century.”

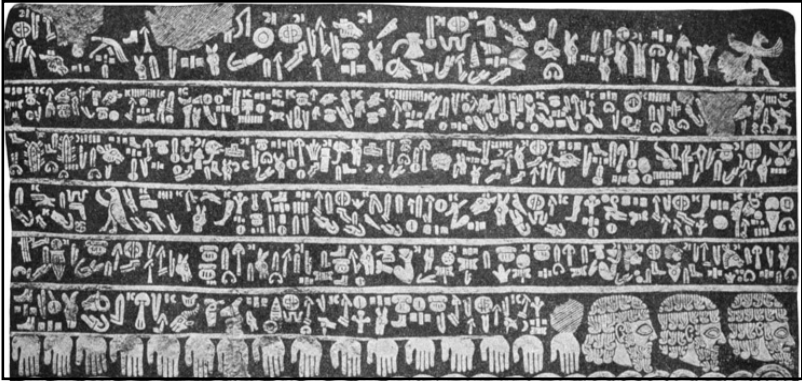
“The early date of these biographies, and the widespread scattering abroad of copies of them, made utterly impossible, it seems to me, any alteration of them or legendary additions to them. Even a hasty reference to almost any one of the numerous scholarly works on the Christian Evidences will bring you into contact with an overwhelming weight of specific evidence that the Gospels were familiar to, and quoted voluminously by, men who were almost and in some cases actually contemporaries of the Apostle John (a copy of whose Gospel, in which are recorded, by the way, some of Christ’s greatest miracles...) “...if you will refer to a work called ‘The Testimony of the Evangelists,’ written by Simon Greenleaf, the author of the greatest work on legal evidence known to the lawyers of the English-speaking nations, you will find the statement that the authenticity of the Gospels is better established than that of the *corpus juris civilis*, the basic law of Continental Europe.”

For the true truth seeker, the above quotes should put to rest the idea that according to Mr. Kushner, reporting for Mr. Ehrman, that “Most of the 27 books were written long after Christ’s death, and only eight of them were actually written by the people initially credited as authors. When the New Testament became canonical, there were lots of Gospels floating around.” Anyone, with a lick of common sense, should be able to ascertain the truth and by way of many genuine ancient documents.

There is an abundance of material on the subject of Christian Evidences. For additional study see: “Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho,” a Jew, Volume I, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and “Origen Against Celsus,” Volume IV, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. For essays on like subjects, see “Apocrypha Literature,” “Governor Pliny,” “History and Jesus Christ” and “Judas Gospel Heresy.” †

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The Hittites

Rex Banks

Controversy has surrounded references to an ethnic group called the Hittites in the patriarchal narratives and elsewhere in Scripture. The Hittite is listed among the inhabitants of the land of Canaan in Abraham's day (Genesis 15:18) and the early narrative also contains references to individual Hittites such as Ephron, Beeri and Elon (Genesis 23:10; 26:34). The problem is that for a long time the Hittites were known only from Scripture. A little over two decades ago John Garstang wrote in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* that "Twenty five years ago some of the foremost orientalist did not believe in the existence of a Hittite nation." This absence of extra biblical confirmation was considered by many to be further proof of the legendary nature of the patriarchal narratives. Then, once again, archaeological discoveries pulled the rug out from underneath the feet of the critics. Garstang explains:

"Following the recognition and rescue of certain hieroglyphic inscriptions from Hamath upon the Orontes in 1872 by Dr. Wright, the archaeological fragments of the forgotten Hittite empire were pieced together in 1894 by Prof Sayce. ... He concluded that in pre-Hellenistic antiquity, the whole of Asia Minor had been dominated by a common political power and cultural influence, which he ascribed to the Hittites. ..."

Garstang concludes his lengthy article by telling us that "the mention ... of Hittites as among the recognized elements of the population of Palestine in patriarchal times is not of necessity anachronistic; it reflects, on the other

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hand, the state of society, under Babylonian influence, which tolerated Semitic colonists among the Hittite communities of Asia Minor.” So once again the scepticism of the critics was shown to be groundless.

In addition, as knowledge of Hittite customs and practice increased, new light was thrown upon certain biblical texts. By way of example, K.K. Harrison tells us that “as a result of the recovery of certain Hittite legal texts from Boghazkoy, the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah by Abraham (Genesis. 23:3ff) comes into considerably clearer perspective” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*). We recall that following the death of his wife, Abraham spoke with the Hittites saying “*If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site*” (Genesis 23:8). Zohar makes it clear that if Abraham wants the cave he must also take possession of the field, and Harrison explains:

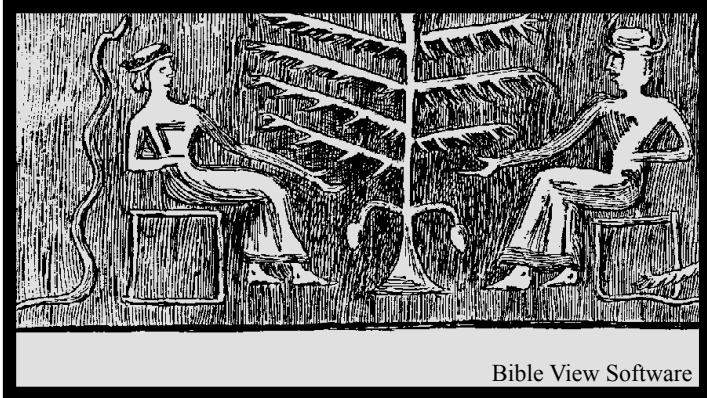
‘Under ancient Hittite law the one who purchased the entire property of the vendor assumed, at the time of transfer, certain legal obligations to render feudal services, the nature and extent of which are at present obscure. ... As a result, Abraham expressed interest in only a part of the total estate with a view to avoiding any attendant legal obligations.’ (See Genesis 23:9)

Interestingly, we read that as part of the transaction, “... *all the trees which were in the field ...*” were deeded to Abraham (Genesis 23:17), and Harrison adds: “The mention of trees in the narrative reflects the Hittite practice of listing the exact number of trees growing on each piece of property sold.”

Thus, not only has archaeology enabled one of the greatest nations of the ancient world to emerge from obscurity to confirm once again the historicity of the Genesis account, but it has also contributed to a better understanding of the text itself.

Many similar examples could be cited, among them the discovery in 1995 of a long-lost city called Urkesh, which appears to be a city of the Horites, another group which at one time was unknown outside Scripture. Clearly those critics of the Bible who are so very quick to find fault with the Scriptural record would do well to keep in mind the old adage that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. †

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Genesis Is Full of Lies?

Mike Benson

Permit me to substantiate my claim. No, this is not an attack on the inerrancy of Scripture, nor is it yet another feeble attempt at recasting the literal language of Genesis into figurative. However, there is a sense in which the first book of the Bible is full of lies.

The Old Testament records a significant incident in Eden's garden. The devil, in the form of a serpent, approached mother Eve and inquired, "*Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'*" His goal was not to learn what the Almighty had actually said, but to prepare the woman's heart for deception. Eve replied that both she and her husband enjoyed the God-given liberty to eat from any and all trees within the garden (Genesis 2:16,17; 3:3), save one — the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She noted that eating and touching fruit from this particular tree would incur the judgment of God and result in the couple's death.

"Not so!" said the devil. "*You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God*" (Genesis 3:4). In essence, the specter of death was simply an intimidation tactic employed by God to dissuade Adam and Eve from becoming like deity themselves. According to "the old serpent" (cf Revelation 12:9; 20:2),

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Jehovah dangled punishment over the first couple to keep their ambition in check. Death was God's lie; it was an empty threat fostered upon man and woman in order to rob them of divinity and omniscience. One commentator observes:

Having led Eve first to question God's authority and goodness and then both to augment and dilute His Word, Satan now was ready for the "kill." "Ye shall surely not die." The fact that God had warned Adam, and Adam had told Eve, that eating the fruit of this tree would result in death, was beside the point. That warning, Satan suggested, was merely because of God's fear that they would learn too much. Not content merely with altering God's Word, Satan now blatantly denied it, calling God a liar (Henry Morris, "The Fall of Man," The Genesis Record, Baker, 111)

I find it striking that Genesis opens with the devil's deception. "...*He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it*" (John 8:44). He accused God of the very thing he was guilty of himself (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3)! However, I find it equally striking how that "the book of beginnings" records how humanity often emulated the devil in dishonesty. Consider — Cain lied about knowing what had happened to Abel (Genesis 4:9). Abraham lied about the identity of Sarah (Genesis 12:11-13; 20:2). Sarah lied about laughing at the promise of God (Genesis 18:9-15). Isaac lied about the identity of Rebekah (Genesis 26:7). Jacob and Rebekah lied to Isaac about a son's true identity (Genesis 27:6-29). Simeon and Levi lied to Shechem and his father, Hamor, about the consequences of the Dinah incident (Genesis 34:13). Jacob's sons lied about the alleged demise of their brother, Joseph (Genesis 37:20; 31:35). Have you noticed a sort of "family history" — grandfather, father, son, etc, of dysfunction and deceit? Potiphar's wife lied about an incident with a slave in her home (Genesis 39:13-19). Joseph lied when he accused his family of spying out the land of Egypt (Genesis 42:7ff). Yes, Genesis (in a sense) is full of lies and serves to remind us that man is perhaps most like the devil when he says that which does not correspond to truth (cf. 2 Peter 2:1; Revelation 2:2).

Jesus hates lies. "*Thus you also hate those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate*" (Revelation 2:15; cf 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). I suggest that we ought to be more like Him (John 14:6). †

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The Scriptures Must Speak to Us

Hollis Miller

One of the silent but powerful forces at work during the early days of the Restoration Movement was the weariness of mind among believers in Christ who knew something was wrong in a divided faith that was meant to be one. Had not Jesus prayed for oneness among all His disciples (John 17:20f)? Separations born of, and perpetuated by, multiple creedal systems did not set well with many searching souls.

When men who advocated abandonment of all creeds and a return to the Scriptures as the only guide for faith began to appear, their plea quickly caught the attention of dissatisfied souls. The time was ripe for renewal, and the plea for scriptural authority to take precedence over all other voices found a receptive audience.

Any effort today to soften the demands of the Scriptures is destined for failure. Temporary victories may seem to be won, but the war itself will be lost. There cannot be final victory where the Word of the Lord does not reign supreme.

Doctrines associated with Chris-

tian faith are to be interpreted in context with the whole of God's Word. Love, sympathy, understanding, brotherhood, and all such matters are included. No doctrine of the Scriptures can be given a working definition that will not permit it to blend with the balance of biblical teaching. For example, Christian love cannot ignore evil and remain Christian love. Paul wrote: "*Love ... does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth*" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Christian love, however strong, cannot turn unbelief in another into belief. Belief must grow within the mind and heart of the one who is believing. It cannot be infused by proxy.

The eyes of Christians are to be kept focused on the Scriptures. Their gaze cannot wander onto that which may seem right at the moment, but will, with the passing of time, prove fatal. †

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**The eyes of Christians
are to be kept focused
on the Scriptures.**

Can We Trust the Bible?

Dan R. Owen

Biblical criticism has made it into the mainstream consciousness through media venues from *Newsweek* to the *History Channel*. These provocative pieces raise lots of questions about the veracity of the Bible but provide few answers. Theological liberalism in the U.S. has had its way and is making sweeping changes. There is now a much different view of Scripture on the part of church members.

Naturalistic critics approach the Bible with the assumption that they must search for natural (as opposed to supernatural) explanations for the Bible's message and content. They categorically dismiss the supernatural from the realm of possibility because it is not empirically verifiable. The result is a process of stripping away the supernatural from Scripture. Some scholars call this “de-mythologizing” as though they were removing the “mythical” element from the Bible and getting down to what may actually have taken place historically. Following such reasoning, they favor evolution over creation, try to explain the flood as a localized event, try to explain things like the plagues or the parting of the Red Sea as natural phenomena that were embellished, and explain the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, and the resurrection as mythical elements written into the Gospels later by Christian storytellers.

Using such an approach, we hear people talking about the “Historical Jesus” (the one that really lived), in contrast with the “Christ of Faith” (the mythical character in the biblical Gospels). Of course, naturalistic scholars do not believe in divine inspiration or inerrancy, but explain the origins of the biblical text naturally, as a long process involving folklore and editors with various theological agendas. No wonder it doesn't matter much to most religious people today what the Bible actually says!

All of this has resulted in an impotent view of the nature of the Bible and an indifferent perspective on the claims the Bible makes on our everyday lives. Such a view of Scripture results in a subjective approach to truth and a very relaxed view of legitimate religious practice. Simply put, one can do whatever one wants to do in the name of religion as long as one feels good about it. With such an approach, man has become the judge of Scripture instead of Scripture being the judge of man.

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This is why people today are bringing every teaching of Scripture into question. What difference does it make if the Bible is not literally inspired by God anyway? Faithful leaders in Christ's church take another view. We believe there is ample evidence that the Bible is what it claims to be. We believe in the supernatural explanations for the Bible's origins, and we accept as historical those supernatural events it records. We believe we are held accountable by God for our obedience to the Bible's teachings. We will never be politically correct while we take such an approach to Scripture, but hopefully we will find approval in the eyes of the Author of Scripture. †

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What Does the Church of Christ Teach?

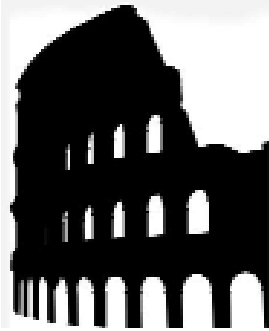
David Tarbet

Many of our friends are surprised to learn there is no official "Church of Christ doctrine". We plead for a return to the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice. It's an undenominational plea — encouraging believers to study the Word for themselves, to make the changes God expects (revealed in the New Testament), and to teach only the Truth.

The apostle Paul gave this instruction: "*Follow the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me*" (2 Timothy 1:13). From this we learn: (1) God has given a "pattern" for Christianity, that is, He has told us what He wants us to do in worship and service to Him. (2) Early Christians "heard" this pattern first from the apostles. (3) It contains the "sound words" for spiritual living, which means anything different from what was given by the apostles in the New Testament is unsound, unhealthy, and unnecessary.

Are you looking for a church that teaches only what the Bible says? Worship with us Sunday! †

David Tarbet preaches for the White Rock congregation in Dallas, Texas, USA.



Romans 6:1-11

Jerry Bates

1. Since Paul had stressed in Romans 5 that man was saved by grace and not works, to what extreme had some people gone in regards to how we should live? (v. 1)
2. What was Paul's answer to the above conclusion? (v. 2)
3. What did Paul say we had done to sin? (v. 2)
4. How does that fact influence our future life? (v. 2)
5. Into whom and what are we baptized? (v. 3)
6. What does baptism signify? (v. 4)
7. What is the action of baptism?
8. What kind of life should we live after being baptized? (v. 4).
9. Our old man is _____ with Christ in baptism. (v. 6)
10. He who has died has been made _____ from sin. (v. 7)
11. After baptism _____ no long has dominion over us. (v. 9)
12. What did Paul mean when he said that death no longer has dominion over Christ?) v. 9)
13. How many times did Christ die to sin? (v. 10)
14. To whom did Christ live His life? (v. 10)
15. After baptism we are _____ to sin, but _____ to God? (v. 11)
16. Where are all these spiritual blessings to be found? (v. 11)

(See inside back cover for answers)

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also should be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, he lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 5:1-11, New King James Version)

Note: This is an important passage in regards to learning how we can be saved from sin. We are saved by grace through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross (ch. 5). The question is, when does that salvation occur? To many in the Christian world, salvation occurs the moment that a person “accepts Christ into his heart” and baptism is performed later, as a symbol of the inward grace that has already been bestowed upon his heart. However, that is not what Paul is teaching. In baptism we enter into a living union with Christ. Since that is true, it follows that in baptism we experience the forgiveness of sins by the power of God. Death to sin occurs in conjunction with baptism. Since we cannot be a Christian without dying to sin, we cannot be a Christian without being baptized. We do not somehow save ourselves, it is simply that when we submit in obedience to baptism, God chooses at that time to wash away our sins. Baptism is clearly a symbol, a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, but it is more than that. We cannot separate the symbol from the reality behind the symbol.

Trust and Grace

Frank Chesser

Sin separates man from God. This gulf cannot be bridged by man's own efforts. It is the *"grace of God that brings salvation"* (Titus 2:11) and the *"precious blood of Christ"* (1 Peter 1:19) that procure redemption for man's sin-sick soul.

In the appropriation of the provisions of grace, man's role is active, not passive. The hearing of a good heart produces faith, for *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Saving faith is obedient faith. Thus, Paul speaks of the *"work of faith"* (1 Thessalonians 1:3), *"faith which worketh by love"* (Galatians 5:6), and the *"obedience of faith"* (Romans 16:26).

Three times in the same text, James described faith only or faith apart from works as *"dead"* (James 2:14-26). Saving faith does not argue with God over the essentiality of divinely ordained conditions for appropriating the gifts of grace to one's soul. Bible faith does not sit in judgment on what God says by use of human reasoning. Obedient faith does not exalt human feelings, personal experiences, what some respected preacher says, or some longstanding practice above what the Bible teaches. Submissive faith does not insist on having its own way.

The Hebrews writer describes the responsive, yielding nature of faith to the will of God. Abel's faith offered the sacrifice that God demanded (Hebrews 11:4). Enoch's faith walked with God in harmony with His will (Hebrews 11:5). Noah's faith built the ark just like God instructed (Hebrews 11:7). Abraham's faith pitched it's tent toward Canaan as God commanded (Hebrews 11:8). Israel's faith marched through the Red Sea and around the walls of Jericho just as God directed (Hebrews 11:29,30).

Unlike those of whom Jesus spoke who *"trusted in themselves"* (Luke 18:9), the trust of these ancients was in God and His grace. For instance, the trust of Abel's faith was in God, and not in the sacrifice itself, nor in his obedience in the offering thereof. Likewise, when a man expresses his faith by complying with the conditions of the Gospel, his trust is in God, grace, and blood, and not in himself and his own act of obedience. *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding"* (Proverbs 3:5). †

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Bible Baptism

David Marube

1. The meaning and mode of Baptism: The word *baptism* goes back to the Greek word “baptize” which means to immerse, to submerge, to bury, to dip, etc. Baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. Baptism requires much water in order to be done biblically (John 3:23).

It requires going “*into*” the water and “*coming up out of*” the water (Acts 8:38,39). It’s a burial (Romans 6:3-6). Baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. One dies to his sins, is buried with his Lord by baptism, and then is resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life.

2. Who is the right candidate for baptism? It is those who have heard the Gospel (Romans 10:14). It is those who have believed in God, in Christ, and in His Word (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15,16; John 14:7).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

It is those who have repented of all their sins (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; 24:47; Acts 17:30). It is those who have confessed Christ publicly as Lord (Acts 8:36,37; Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32). Any person who is not old enough to hear, believe, repent, and confess doesn't need baptism.

3. Is baptism necessary for salvation? Yes, it is. According to the Bible, one must be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). Baptism is one of the commands of the Gospel. Those who refuse to obey the Gospel will be punished (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; 1 Peter 4:17,18).

4. Can baptism be done twice? Baptism cannot be administered for the second time unless: a. It wasn't done in the right way — by immersion — the first time. b. It was done at the wrong time, when one was too young and hadn't come to the age of accountability to know what he was doing. c. It was done for the wrong purpose, other than for salvation (Mark 16:16), and for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

5. How many baptisms are authorized by God? Only one (Ephesians 4:5)! Satan deceives people to believe that it doesn't matter how one is baptized as long as he is honest in his heart. This is a lie! Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). To do God's will on baptism is to be baptized scripturally, by being immersed, submerged, buried, dipped in water. Any other mode of baptism is not scriptural, and so it isn't done according to the will of God, and those who practice it will have no share of eternal life. †

David Marube is an evangelist and World Bible School follow-up teacher in Kesii, Kenya.

Baptism

“There is no more propriety in calling baptism the work of the man baptized than there is in calling the burial the work of the person buried.”

~ David Lipscomb

Deceitful Persuasive Words VS. Sound Doctrine

Owen B. Moseley

In Colossians 2:4, Paul said: *“Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.”* Paul warns of the danger of being deceived by the persuasiveness of words. Paul understood that the greater threat against the church, then, was from men who would use subtle and deceptive reasoning rather than threats from an obvious persecutor. Nothing has changed. Today, in many congregations of the church, the devil is actively at work from within through the use of enticing words that make light of doctrine. He deceives also, by appealing to the emotions and by focusing on the “felt” needs of the “unchurched” (a euphemism for sinners).

The word “doctrine” is used 37 times in 36 different verses in the NKJV of the Bible. Jesus talked about the doctrine of God in John 7:16,17: *“Jesus answered them and said, ‘My **doctrine** is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the **doctrine**, whether it*

is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.’” In John 18:19 we read: *“The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His **doctrine**.”* Are those who want to de-emphasize doctrine suggesting that the doctrine of God and Christ is less important? Less important than what? Making people feel good? Do the ones who de-emphasize doctrine not fit into the category Paul warns against in 2 Timothy 4:3,4, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”*

Paul did not make light of erroneous teaching (doctrine). Paul knew that doctrine has a power to mold the character of an individual. In Romans 6:17 Paul said: *“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of **doctrine** to which you were delivered.”* In

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Romans 16:17 Paul said: *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the **doctrine** which you learned, and avoid them.”*

Notice the importance Paul attached to doctrine in the following verses: 1 Timothy 1:3 — *“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia; remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other **doctrine**.”* 1 Timothy 1:10 — *“for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound **doctrine**, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.”* (Notice that sound doctrine is according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Many today attempt to separate doctrine from the Gospel.) 1 Timothy 4:6 — *“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good **doctrine** which you have carefully followed.”* (Notice that Timothy would be a good minister of Jesus Christ when he carefully followed words of faith and the good doctrine.) 1 Timothy 4:13 — *“Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to **doctrine**.”* 1 Timothy 4:16 — *“Take heed to yourself and to the **doctrine**. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”* (By taking

heed to the doctrine, Timothy could save himself and others.) 1 Timothy 5: 17 — *“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor; especially those who labor in the word and **doctrine**.”* (If doctrine is not important, or is less important, why are elders especially worthy of double honor if they labor in the Word and doctrine?)

John also considered doctrine to be important. 2 John, verses 9,10 — *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the **doctrine** of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the **doctrine** of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this **doctrine**, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.”* Notice that John talks about the doctrine **of** Christ, not the doctrine **about** Christ. The teachings **of** Christ and the teachings **about** Christ are two different things. Both are important. Equally important are the inspired teachings of the writers of the Bible.

May God help us to not be deceived by the persuasive words of men. May we all do everything within our power to adhere both to the teachings **about** Christ and the teachings (doctrine) **of** Christ as revealed by Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament. †

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EFFECTS OF ABANDONING GOD

Bill Nicks

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error [perversion] which was due” (Romans 1:26,27). “Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves” (Romans 1:24).

This passage describes the effects of man abandoning God. God abandons man by withholding His providence from them. Three times in this chapter it is said, *“God gave them up”* (1:24,26,28). The reason God had abandoned man is that man had first abandoned God.

Man, with the image of God stamped upon him, was made for fellowship with God (1 John 1:3) and to depend on the Spirit of God. Man destroyed the balance of life when he rebelled against his Creator and sought independence from Him.

Seeking freedom, man projected himself into the most abject slavery. The crux of sin is pride, and this pride led man to his fall, utter servitude to self and Satan.

Originally, “passions” (pathos) referred to all our feelings, good or bad. In the New Testament, the only uses are bad, passions of dishonor, vile passions (1 Thessalonians 4:5; Colossians 3:5). The resultant burning in their lust one toward another of men toward men and women toward women describes the homosexuality of the pagan world. Strangely, some moderns of the world defend this practice as a “valid lifestyle”. Were it not for the threat of AIDS, precipitated in part by the sordid practice of homosexuality, this reversion to an ancient sin might have become a leading class of respectable people in a modern perverted and morally defunct society.

How can anyone defend this practice in the light of Romans 1? God created them *“male and female”* for the natural, heterosexual use, as stated in Genesis 1:27f. Lesbianism is a perversion of God’s natural and

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original order. It is dishonoring the body, which is a “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 6:19f). In burning in their lust one toward another, males worked “*unseemliness*,” an old word meaning “deformed”. This word is translated “*shame*” in Revelation 16:15, describing the one who is naked, who does not keep his garments, “*lest they see his shame*”. To all children of God, the practice is shameful! To God, such deeds are “*deserving of death*” (Romans 1:32). †

Bill Nicks, now deceased, is a former missionary to Africa and the island of Trinidad in the West Indies.

THE FACTS

Adam and Eve, for one bite of luscious fruit when they were not even hungry, brought sin, suffering, shame and death upon themselves and the human race. Genesis 3

Lot’s wife, revealing her longing for the things that pertain to earth, took one look back and became a pillar of salt. Genesis 19

Achan, for a garment he could not wear, and for silver and gold he could not spend, paid with all his possessions, his family and his life. Joshua 7

Samson, for the caress of a hypocritical woman, lost his will, his strength, his liberty, his eyes, and finally his life. 2 Samuel 11,12

Ahab, coveting another’s vineyard, permitted his wife to have its owner killed. 1 Kings 21

Judas, for thirty pieces of silver, which he had no occasion or conscience to use, took his own life in shame and despair. Matthew 27

Demas, loving the transient world more than a permanent future, forsook Paul and provoked the wrath of heaven. 2 Timothy 4

The Christian who seeks first anything above the kingdom of heaven will lose his soul forever. Matthew 6:16

His Grace Reaches Me

Bobby Wheat

One of the most descriptive and feeling-filled songs that we sing is the one written by Whitney Gleason entitled, “His Grace Reaches Me”. Gleason’s lyrics are filled with marvel and awe at the magnitude of God’s love. The Savior’s grace is “deeper than the ocean and wider than the sea”, it is “higher than the mountains and brighter than the sun”.

The most astounding thing about God’s grace, though, is not its magnitude. The greatest thing about God’s grace is that it reaches me. It is widespread, it was offered for everyone, but it affects even me.

How amazing! The God of the universe, who made the oceans and seas and mountains and sun — His grace, His gift reaches me! The Psalmist shared this sense of wonder: “*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,*” he said, “*what is man that you are mindful of him?*” (Psalm 8:3,4). To paraphrase, “How is it that you, God, can care about something so insignificant as puny man?” The amazing thing is that He does; He really cares!

Even more significant is the fact that God didn’t just **say** that He cares. No, even better, He **showed** that He cares! Paul describes the marvel of God’s grace by telling what God did for us: “*At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly*” (Romans 5:6). Look at verse eight, where Paul tells us, “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”

Did you get that? **CHRIST DIED FOR US!** No more death, no more guilt, no more lives broken by sin. In one painful, powerful act, God wiped the slate clean. I am saved! God’s grace reaches **me!** “*It is by grace*” that I have been saved (Ephesians 2:8).

Now, all of this may or may not have been news to you. Regardless of where you are, though, the truth about God’s grace can be life-changing if you will just let it. There are some appropriate responses to what God has done that will enable Him to work even greater wonders in your life. Here are two responses that the knowledge of God’s grace should cause in us:

1. Bask in the warmth of God’s grace. So much of religious rhetoric is de-

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signed to elicit guilt feelings over personal and spiritual imperfections in our lives. However, the truth is that, in spite of our failure to measure up, God still loves us and pours out His gift of salvation.

2. Respond to His gift with a gift of your own, the freewill offering of your entire being to God. Let yourself be used for His purposes. God showed His love by doing something for you; show your love by returning service to Him. †

Bobby Wheat, former missionary to Zimbabwe, preaches for the Lord's church in Winfield, Kansas, USA.

Amazing Grace

Joseph Scriven

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now I'm found

Was blind, but now I see.

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,

I have already come;

'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,

And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise

Then when we've first begun

God's Power – The Cross

Ronald D. Bryant

The purpose of the cross does not lie in some complex, abstract, celestial transaction, but rather in a literal subduing of the rebellious heart of man. God's desire and design has ever been one of winning — of changing — the heart of rebel man. It would have been easier to suppress the rebel heart, but God seeks to subdue man's pride that He might enjoy man's fellowship.

What occurs when force is exerted? It can win the day and produce some quick surrenders, but it cannot win the heart. Force exerted can produce respect based on fear, but it cannot produce true fellowship. God could have exerted force, and could have driven man away from rebellion, away from hell. God could have made man do what is right, and stay away from the downward path to hell. However, God's ultimate goal has never been that of saving us from hell. He sent Jesus to save us from ourselves — from our



sins. His purpose in the whole of the redemptive work of Jesus has been to the end of calling us into a relationship with Himself, based on love and faith.

The cross of Jesus thus understood stands as an imposing barrier to the person contemplating sin.

The loving gaze of the suffering Savior seeks to move each of us away from selfish conduct and self-gratification. To come to the foot of the cross is to live. All that one can hold to, and at the same time wholeheartedly cling to the cross, is permitted. The person that persists in sin must do so by stubbornly ignoring the cross as a barrier to further transgression, and he must reject the sacrifice of Jesus. Perhaps in the passing of time, the death of an innocent lamb might fade from mind and be forgotten. Yet, neither heaven nor earth can forget the day that God went to the cross and died for man. †

Ronald D. Bryant lives in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.

Victory in Jesus

Bobby Dockery

Many different metaphors are used in the New Testament to describe the Christian life. Jesus compared it to carrying a cross (Matthew 16:24). The book of Hebrews describes it as a race that must be patiently run (Hebrews 12:1). Peter compared it to the process of growth and maturation by which an infant becomes an adult (1 Peter 2:2).

One of the vivid and descriptive metaphors associated with the Christian life, however, is the New Testament picture of Christianity as a battle that must be fought and won. Paul commanded Timothy to *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Timothy 6:12), and he reminds us that *“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”* (Ephesians 6:12). This is the great “Armageddon” described in the Book of Revelation (16:16).

Fortunately, this is a battle whose outcome has already been assured. *“In all these things we are more than conquerors...”* (Romans 8:37). Note the following ways in which a Christian can have the assurance of “Victory in Jesus”;

1. **Victory in Life.** For the Christian, successful living is not a matter of wealth accumulated, or status attained, or personal triumphs earned. Rather it is the result of having *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27). As soldiers for the Lord, we have been equipped with the weapons that are *“mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4). On the daily battle ground of temptation, Satan can be routed and put to flight with the sword of the Spirit, *“which is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17).
2. **Victory in Death.** Jesus promised that even the gates of Hades (i.e., death) could not withstand the power of the church (Matthew 16:18). By His resurrection, Jesus crushed the head of Satan and broke the power of death. So complete and irrevocable was His rout of death that the Bible says that He *“hath abolished death and hath brought light and immortality to light through the Gospel”* (2 Timothy 1:10)! The reality of Christ’s resurrection assures His followers that for them, too, death will one day

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“be swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

- 3. Victory in Eternity.** Victory in Christ extends beyond the grave to ultimate triumph in eternity. The Bible says, *“When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”* (Ephesians 4:8). One of the gifts that the triumphant Jesus offers to His faithful followers is eternal life (Romans 6:23). In eternity, the legions of Christ will stack their armor and receive the crown of final victory from their Commander (2 Timothy 4:8). *“Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* †

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

Love Beyond Compare

Harry Presley

I woke one night and looked above
Into a twinkling starry sky
And marveled that God’s endless love
Should come to one as small as I.

When there are galaxies up there
With measurements beyond the mind
And yet that love beyond compare
Was sent instead to humankind.

The Heavens march without an end
And we’re so fragile, and so small
Why did that boundless love descend
On those most miniscule of all?

Our God so loved the souls He made
Despite the stain of Eden’s curse
His love in Jesus was conveyed
To man, above this universe.

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Ten Basic Bible Facts About Salvation

Randy Kea

1. **All accountable people are lost in sin.** *“All are guilty”* (Romans 3:19). *“All have sinned”* (Romans 3:23).
2. **We cannot save ourselves without the Lord.** *“When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly”* (Romans 5:6).
3. **Only Jesus Christ can save.** *“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 16:6). *“Neither is there salvation in any other”* (Acts 4:12).
4. **Not all people will be saved.** *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matthew 25:46).
5. **Most people will be lost.** *“For wide is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matthew 7:13,14).
6. **Many will be lost, expecting to be saved.** *“Not everyone that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name: and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful words?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity’”* (Matthew 7:21-23).
7. **None can be saved after death.** *“I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come”* (John 8:21).
8. **None can be saved after the second coming of Christ.** *“...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).
9. **God desires all to be saved.** *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:3,4).
10. **God will only save those who will love and obey Him.** *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). *“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”* (Revelation 22:14). †

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Since I Am in Christ...

James Orinda

- * I have been justified — completely forgiven and made righteous (Romans 5:1).
- * I died with Christ and died to the power of sin's rule over my life (Romans 6:6).
- * I am free forever from condemnation (Romans 8:1).
- * I have been placed into Christ by God's doing (1 Corinthians 1:30).
- * I have received the Spirit of God into my life that I might know things freely given to me by God (1 Corinthians 2:12).
- * I have been given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- * I have been bought with a price; I am not my own; I belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).
- * I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God in Christ, and I have been given the Holy Spirit as pledge, guaranteeing my inheritance to come (2 Corinthians 1:12; Ephesians: 13,14).
- * Since I have died, I no longer live for myself, but for Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 14,15).
- * I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I am now living is Christ's life (Galatians 2:20).
- * I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).
- * I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and am without blame before Him (Ephesians 1:4).
- * I have been raised up and sealed with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 2:6).

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- * I have direct access to God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:16).
- * I may approach God with boldness, freedom, and confidence (Ephesians 2:6).
- * I have been rescued from the domain of Satan's rule and transferred to the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13).
- * I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sin. The debt against me has been cancelled (Colossians 1:14).
- * Christ Himself is in me (Colossians 1:27).
- * I am firmly rooted in Christ and am now being built in Him (Colossians 2:11).
- * I have been spiritually circumcised. My old unregenerate nature has been removed (Colossians 2:11).
- * I have been buried, raised, and made alive with Christ (Colossians 2:12,13).
- * I died with Christ and I have been raised up with Christ. My life is now hidden with Christ in God. Christ is now my life (Colossians 3:1-4).
- * I have been given a Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).
- * I have been saved and set apart according to God's doing (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5).
- * Because I am sanctified and am one with the Sanctifier, He is not ashamed to call me brother (Hebrews 2:11).
- * I have the right to come boldly before the throne of God to find mercy and grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).
- * I have been given exceedingly great and precious promises by God, through which I am a partaker of God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). †

James Orinda is a Gospel preacher in Awendo, Kenya.

SALVATION THE GREATEST GIFT

Wayne Barrier

Evangelists of the early first century had the power to perform miracles. According to the New Testament (Acts), they could heal the sick, teach in languages they didn't know, and raise the dead. These powers were used as they spread the Gospel of Christ across the world. We consider these abilities as powerful spiritual gifts, given by God to demonstrate His power, Supreme Being and love. It is hard to visualize these gifts today. Imagine one with the power to raise the dead or heal the terminally ill. Possession of such power would be a great gift. It is hard to understand when first considered, but the Bible says that there are greater gifts. Consider 1 Corinthians 13:13, when Paul says, "*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*". He had just stated that the powerful gifts of the day would cease, vanish, and be done away (1 Corinthians 13:8-11). The greater gifts would remain.

Paul had already discussed the power and greatness of love. Notice the words in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are propheties, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.*" The greatest gift today is love. Love for God and man is required as the greatest commandment of Christ (Matthew 22:36-40). God is love (1 John 4:8). There is no fear in love (1 John 4:18). Nothing can separate the faithful Christian from the love of God (Romans 8:39).

The gift of love is given to the child of God. Do you have this gift? Because of God's love for all men, all can be saved (John 3:16). We must accept God's invitation to follow Jesus (Matthew 11:28,29), accept salvation from sin (Acts 2:36-38), in order to enjoy the blessings of being a child of God (Ephesians 4:5). Are you a baptized believer? †

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Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses Psalm 8:4-6; Hebrews 2:6-8

What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?

Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor.

Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet .

The passage in Hebrews takes the statements in Psalm 8 and applies them as a prophetic description of Christ as He was born in the flesh. However, in the Greek Septuagint translation of the original Hebrew, the word “**elohim**” was rendered “angels” rather than “**God**” because of its plural form, and this was also used in the Hebrews 2 passage.

These verses deal with two major subjects: **man**, in the creation; and **Jesus Christ**, in the incarnation. First, let’s consider the verses as they relate to man in the creation.

The question is asked, “Why should God be in any way mindful of such an insignificant creature as man, the being God fashioned from common earth?”

There is one reason: When God breathed the breath of life into that earthy body, man became a “living soul”. What does this actually mean? It means that, out of the totality of God’s creation, man alone was endowed with such gifts that he was actually “only a little lower” than the God who created him! Because of that gifted greatness, God placed man in authority over all that He had created!

Whether we accept the meaning as ‘Christ was made a little lower than God’, when He took the human form, or whether we accept the word as “angels”, denoting man’s fallen state and the fact that Jesus in the flesh partook of the actual limiting consequences of fallen man in the flesh, it is very clear that Christ’s mission was and is to restore man to the position of being only a little lower than *God*. What a revelation!

PROVERBS 17:22



One day the pilot of a small private plane was told by the tower to hold short of the active runway while a DC-8 landed. The large plane landed, rolled out, turned around, and taxied back past the small plane.

Some quick-witted comedian in the DC-8 crew got on the radio and said, "What a cute little plane. Did you make it all by yourself?"

The pilot of the small plane, not about to let the insult go by, came back with a real zinger: "I made it out of DC-8 parts. Another landing like yours and I'll have enough parts for a second one."



Here are three laws that you may not be aware of:

(1) *Oliver's Law of Public Speaking*: A closed mouth gathers no feet.

(2) *Law of Logical Argument*:

Anything is possible if you don't know what you are talking about.

(3) *Law of Probability*: The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.



A fellow was walking along a country road when he came upon a farmer working in his field. The man called out to the farmer, "How long will it take me to get to the next town?"

The farmer didn't answer. The guy waited a bit and then started walking again. After he had gone about a hundred yards, the farmer yelled out, "About 20 minutes."

"Thank you. But why didn't you tell me that when I asked you?"

"Didn't know how fast you could walk then."



The new army recruit was given guard duty at 2:00 a.m. He did his best for a while, but at about 4:00 a.m. he went to sleep. He awakened to find the officer of the day standing before him.

Remembering the heavy penalty for being asleep on guard duty, this smart young man kept his head bowed for another moment, then

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looked upward and reverently said, “A-a-a-men!”



A man asked a clerk in a Christian bookstore about a display of hats with the letters WWJD on them. The clerk explained that WWJD stands for “What would Jesus do?” and that the idea is to get people to consider this question when making decisions.

The man pondered a moment, then replied, “I don’t think He’d pay \$17.95 for that hat.”



Boudreaux live across de bayou from Clarence, who he don like at all. Dey all de time yell across de bayou at each other. Boudreaux would yell to Clarence, “If I had a way to cross dis bayou, I’d come over dere an beat you up good, yeah!”

Dis went on for years. Finally de state done built a bridge across dat bayou right by dere houses. Boudreaux’s wife Marie, she say, “Now is you chance, Boudreaux. Why don you go over dere an beat up dat Clarence like you say?”

Boudreaux say, “OK,” and start across de bridge, but he see a sign on de bridge an he stop to read it, and den he go back home.

Marie say, “Why you back so soon?”

And Boudreaux say, “Marie, I dun change my mind ‘bout beatin’ up dat Clarence. You know, Marie, dey got a sign on dat dere bridge dat say, ‘Clarence 13 ft. 6 in.’ You know, he don look near dat big when I yell at him across de bayou!”



Two 8-year-old boys were overheard lamenting the plight of being young. One said to the other,

“Parents just don’t make any sense at all. First they teach you to talk, then they teach you to walk, and then when you learn to do both, they tell you to ‘Sit down and don’t say another word!’”



I got to wondering just how many lawyer jokes there are. After extensive research I found the answer: Only three. The rest are true stories.



Dr. Smoothie was known for his own kind of bedside manner. He came into his patient’s hospital room to discuss the bill for his services, an amount thought by the patient to be quite exorbitant.

The doctor began by saying, “Mr. Jones, I have good news for you. You’ve now met your deductible.”

Why Do Some People Hate So Much?

Owen Cosgrove

The mother was questioning her little boy about what he had studied in Bible School that morning. He told her that they had studied about how Jesus loves the little children, and that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for us, and how that Christians are all supposed to love one another. After a few more similar statements, he asked, “Mom, why do some people hate so much?”

It’s a good question. Since all of the law and the prophets are based on love for God and for one’s neighbor, and since “he that loveth not knows not God”, and since he that hates his brother is dwelling in darkness (1 John 4:8-11), the little boy’s question truly deserves some careful thought.

There are some things that we are supposed to hate. We are to love good and hate evil (Hebrews 1:9). There are some things that even our loving God hates (Proverbs 6:16ff). However, hating good people and good things is a sign that one has not truly been converted (Titus 3:3-5).

People hate because of ignorance. The Lord’s statement, “*Father, forgive them for they know not what*

they do” is an obvious example of this. When Saul of Tarsus was wreaking destruction on the church, he admitted later that he did it through ignorance and unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13).

People hate because of envy. Cain hated and killed the righteous Abel because he was jealous. Envy led the brothers of Joseph to sell him into slavery. Pilate perceived that the hateful Jewish leaders were envious of Jesus (Matthew 27:18). Love does not envy (1 Corinthians 13: 4). Envy makes people hate.

People hate because they have such little self respect. If they love their neighbor as themselves, it does no good, because their own self-image is so poor. They try to build themselves up by tearing others down, and their frustrated hearts feast on the trash of hatred and bitterness.

People hate because they do not pray. The Lord taught us to pray, even for our enemies, and to do good to those who spitefully use us. It may not always be that easy to do, but it is far better than feeding on resentment and animosity.

People hate because they are

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selfish. No wonder the Lord taught us to deny ourselves if we want to follow Him. Hatred and selfishness usually go together. The selfish person does not care whom or how much he hurts, but how little does he realize that his hatred winds up hurting himself most of all.

People hate because their relationship with God is poor. Much of our relationship with God has to do with our relationship with others. The Parable of the Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 tells us that our relationship with other people directly correlates with our relationship with Christ.

People hate because they do not realize that such attitudes will cause them to be lost. If we want to go to heaven, we had better keep our outlook sweet and kind, because God is not going to allow hateful people to defile the peace and joy of that beautiful place. †

Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and lives in Waxahachie, Texas, USA.

- ★ If you plant honesty, you will reap trust.
- ★ If you plant goodness, you will reap friends.
- ★ If you plant humility, you will reap greatness.
- ★ If you plant perseverance, you will reap contentment.
- ★ If you plant consideration, you will reap perspective.
- ★ If you plant hard work, you will reap success.
- ★ If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation.
- ★ If you plant faith in God, you will reap a harvest.

Crisis of Life

Tom Holland

A college roommate who now chairs the psychology department of a western university was talking to me about the so called “midlife crisis”. He observed, “There are crises in all phases of life.”

For some, youth is a crisis period. Think of the young people who never live beyond their teens. Each year thousands of young people die in accidents.

Youth is a crisis period because decisions are made in youth that impact the remaining years of life. Someone once observed that many people spend the first half of life making the last half miserable.

God’s Word recognizes that youth can be a crisis period of life because the Lord says so much to and about young people. For example, the familiar admonition to the young, “*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...*” (Ecclesiastes 12: 1). Consider the sobering reminder that young people will face God in judgment (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

I personally know some young people who will be judged as 15, 16, 17, 18, or 19-year-old people. These were the chronological ages they had reached when death snatched them into eternity.

Some people die physically in youth, while others die spiritually. Which is the greater tragedy?

The crisis of youth is seen in the sinfulness of the world to which they are constantly exposed. The **parents** of those of us who are older would not have permitted people to use the profanity in our homes that is now the daily offering of television. God’s name is now blasphemed in stereo. Lust is now presented in living color. Greed is portrayed as an honorable approach to life.

The Lord Jesus Christ is still the hope of youth. The Word of the Lord is the power by which the way of youth can be cleansed and directed (Psalm 119:9).

There are some genuine Christians today among our young people. The apostle John accurately assessed the matter when he wrote, “*I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one*” (1 John 2:14). †

Tom Holland is a writer and Gospel preacher living in Brentwood, Tennessee, USA.

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ON BEING FORGETFUL

Shan Jackson

Humans tend to be forgetful. Realizing this, the apostle Peter wrote part of his epistle that we know as 2 Peter to stir up the Christians by reminding them of spiritual truths (2 Peter 1:13). During the era of the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to observe the Passover to remind them that He delivered them out of Egypt. When the Israelites finally crossed over Jordan, Joshua laid twelve stones for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever (Joshua 4:7). After a great victory against the Philistines, Samuel raised up a stone and called it “Ebenezer”, which was to remind the Israelites that the Lord helped them (1 Samuel 7:12). Similarly, today we are reminded of Christ’s sacrificial love for us when we observe the Lord’s Supper.

In Luke 12, Christ spoke the Parable of the Rich Fool. He was rich, but forgetful about some very important things. This man had a plenteous harvest, but instead of thanking God for it, he forgot about God and decided to solve his problem by building bigger barns. He made his plans without a thought of God. He was like the man who said, *“Today or tomorrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain”* (James 4:13). He busied himself with his “eat, drink and be merry” attitude, and had no time for God. His security lay in the abundance of possessions. He felt secure only when he had enough goods hoarded up for the rest of his life. The rich fool also lived in an egocentric world. He had an “I” complex. In his few short sentences, he mentioned himself nearly a dozen times. In short, he forgot about other people. The rich fool’s goal was to store up goods and to eat, drink, and be merry. This sounded like a perfect goal for him. The only problem was that *“this night thy soul shall be required of thee”* (Luke 12:20).

Let us be reminded that the things of this world are temporal, and our goal in life is to be with God in glory. Have we been forgetful about these things, and as such, have we become indifferent in our attitude towards God and one another?

In his epistle to the brethren in Philippi Paul exhorts those Christians to *“look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”* (Philippians 2:4).

Yes, we should not be so wrapped up with doing our own things, but rather, let us seek ways to bring God glory and to bless the lives of others. ☩

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DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Some Good Habits We Should Cultivate and Form

Wendell Winkler

Daily Bible reading (Psalm 1:1,2; 1 Timothy 4:13,15; 2 Timothy 2:15). As our bodies need daily food, so our souls need daily spiritual food (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:1-3). The astounding indication of ignorance often existing among members of the church is an evidence of a failure to regularly and frequently read and study the Bible. Let us cease using our Bibles as mere safes or keepsake albums. Furthermore, let us cease reading our newspapers daily while neglecting our Bibles. He who reads the newspaper daily but not his Bible may be compared to a man who devours crumbs in the garbage pail, but passes up the beef steak and mashed potatoes. Or, he may be likened to the maiden who threw away the precious jewels and chose to wear the box.

Daily prayer (Matthew 6:11; Psalm 55:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2; Romans 12:12). Daniel and Jesus are examples of those who prayed daily (Daniel 6:10; Mark 15; Luke 6:12; 18:1). What would you think if your child went an entire day without speaking to you? Wonder what God thinks about His children who fail to talk to Him daily? Someone has said, "Prayer: the key to the day, lock of the night." Therefore, pray, at least, at the beginning and at the close of the day. "Hem in both ends of the day with a prayer, and it won't be so likely to unravel in the middle."

Daily family devotion (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). "The family that prays together stays together." Such devotions will have a tremendous influence for good on the children, as well as preparing the father for participation in the public worship.

Regularity in attendance at church services. Church services should be the highlight of the week (Psalm 122:1). We are taught by command: "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25), by example (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:23) and by implication (James 4:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17) to attend the services faithfully. †

Wendell Winkler (1931 – 2005) was a highly respected Gospel preacher and served several years as the Chairman of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.



Being Religious Without Being Spiritual

Ancil Jenkins

The world is not much attracted to “religion.” Many people had a “dose” of this when young and determined to never go back to it. Others have had equally bad experiences at different times in their lives. They view religion as a set of distasteful commands, prohibitions, and precepts. They are right in a sense, because some “religions” are like this. Yet, they are wrong since they do not understand the meaning and the power of a spiritual life.

No one was more religious than Jesus Christ. He kept perfectly the ordinances and commands of Moses’ law (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:22,23). Yet, despite His “religion”, He never had difficulty drawing a crowd. In fact, one of His major problems during part of His ministry was escaping the multitudes. This is in bold contrast with the Jewish religious leaders. No multitudes flocked to them to hear even the smallest word. One difference was in the spiritual lives of Jesus and the Jews. Jesus’ unbroken and intimate

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relationship with His Father gave Him the power to live and triumph in His earthly existence. I am convinced that one of the great hindrances of the spread of the Gospel is too many Christians who are *religious* but not *spiritual*.

Some have a life with an incomplete commitment. Jesus said, *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:33). In this context the Lord has called for us to “give up” or “hate” our father, mother, brother, and sister. He calls us to willingly love Him more than even ourselves. Jesus left us no loopholes. All that we have and all we are belong to Him. Yet how many find only misery in their walk with Jesus because there is some part of their life that they feel they can control better than He? The tragedy of this kind of commitment — or lack of commitment — is that one eventually feels that he or she is absolutely right with God, yet is still living in sin, without a completely surrendered life. They can commit sin in the unsurrendered area and feel they have done no wrong.

Another way to be religious and not spiritual is to have pragmatic principles. These folks keep God’s commands and hold certain truths as long as they are not inconvenienced. I heard of an elder who believed and taught that “husband of one wife” in an elder’s qualifications meant one wife — period. If an elder’s wife died, he believed the widower could not be an elder even if he remarried. However, he immediately changed his view when his own wife died and he remarried. In more serious matters, some believe the Bible teaches one thing until they find themselves in the place where the teaching applies to them. When continuing to hold a particular truth means a denial or sacrifice, it is so easy for people to change their principles instead of their actions.

On the other hand, in our concern for serving and obeying God, we can become “gnat strainers”. Jesus warned, *“Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! ... Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness”* (Matthew 23:24,28). We can so focus on the minute details of our own opinions that we miss the massive truths of God. However, we must never be more concerned with cleansing the outside of the cup than the inside. Jesus called those whose lives were affected only outwardly by His teaching “hypocrites.”

Spiritual people committed to Jesus Christ can change the world. “Religious” people never can. The world is watching us — what does it see? †

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

The Winter of Life

Bonnie Rushmore

Every congregation has at least one, while larger congregations have several. We observe them at every gathering of the Lord's church. You know who they are. We all know them by name.

I am referring to the members of the church who never miss a service. They seem to follow the Postal Creed, "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night" when it is time for services at the local congregation. If, by chance, they were not present, everyone would ask about them. If no one knows of their whereabouts, someone will call to check on them. If they do not answer the phone, someone will drive to their homes to see that they are alright. When these individuals are out of town, they call an elder or the preacher to inform someone of their whereabouts. In their minds, "being up in years" or "simply not feeling well" is not an excuse to stay home.

Not only do these individuals attend all the scheduled services, but they continually serve God to the best of their abilities. Retirement from secular work does not mean retirement from God's work. They continue to teach Bible classes, visit the hospitals and shut-ins, reach out to the lost, assist with cleaning and maintaining the meeting house, etc. They will not let age interfere with serving God. These individuals attend all the worship services, work sessions, and fellowship gatherings. You can count on them to be present when the "doors are open".

Perhaps these individuals are following the examples of biblical



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characters who served God late in life. A few of these would include:

- ★ Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage at the age of 80 (Exodus 7:7) and died at the age 120, after leading the Israelites to the edge of the promised land (Deuteronomy 34:70).
- ★ Sarah, who gave birth to Isaac at the age of 91 (Genesis 17:17-21).
- ★ Caleb overthrew the inhabitants in Hebron when he was 85 (Joshua 14:6-15).
- ★ Anna, a prophetess, still served God night and day in the temple at the age of 84. She was there when Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the Temple to offer sacrifice according to the law of the Lord (Luke 2:22-24, 36-38).
- ★ Simeon was old enough to be ready to die when the Holy Spirit revealed that he would not see death until he saw Jesus. When baby Jesus was brought to the temple for purification, the Holy Spirit directed Simeon to the child, and to bless Him (Luke 2:25-34).
- ★ Naomi was too old to have another husband and more children when her husband and two sons died in the land of Moab (Ruth 1:1-12). She must have taught her daughters-in-law about the God of the Bible, since Ruth insisted on following Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16-22). When Ruth gave birth to a son, after her marriage to Boaz, Naomi cared for the child. Naomi's influence on this young woman paved the way for the Messiah. Christ came through the lineage of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:13-22).
- ★ When Samuel anointed Saul as king (1 Samuel 9:17), Samuel called himself gray-headed and affirmed that he had served the Israelites righteously since childhood (1 Samuel 12:1-4). Forty years later, Samuel anointed David as the second king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). During his lifetime, Samuel served as a prophet (1 Samuel 3:1-18) and was the last judge to rule over Israel (1 Samuel 7:15).

Just as these and many other biblical characters served God late in life, we, too, must serve God as long as we live on planet earth. Our physical abilities may hinder our work, but we must continue to work in some capacity. Even those who are confined to a hospital bed can pray for those reaching out to the lost, can make phone calls, or write short notes of encouragement. Let it be said of each of us, "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31 NKJV). †

Bonnie Rushmore, a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*, labors daily with World Evangelism, and lives in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

It Is Gold

Bob Plunket

Our six-year-old grandson was playing with a box in which I keep my wedding ring. Later I went to get my ring and it was gone. So we started questioning Zack. “Did you see it?” we asked. “Yes.” “Did you have it in your hand?” “Yes.” “Did you put it in your pocket for safekeeping?” “I don’t remember.” “Did you take it outside?” “I can’t remember.” The next day he came back and we cross-examined him again. Finally, in his frustration, he said to his grandmother, “You would think that ring was gold or something.” She said, “It was gold, but much more.”

Parents, did you hear what he said? At the green age of six he already knows the things we fret over and are so concerned about are the things we treasure most. You do not have to sit down with your children and tell them what are the important things in your life. They already know by the time and the money and attention we spend on them. The son already knows that he gets a lot more praise for a home run or a touchdown than for a star in Bible school. Perhaps the daughter gets more attention for being first in the ballet class than first in the Sunday school class. They know which one we love the most — the car, the house, the boat, the sporting events, or the church.

It would be grand for children to come in and say, “Daddy, you would think Mother was gold or something by the way you treat her”. Equally good would be the words, “Mother, you would think Daddy was gold or something by the way you love him.” Imagine your child telling another child, “You would think the church is gold or something by the way Mother and Dad attend and work in it”. How wonderful it would be for a child to say to the Sunday school teacher, “You would think our Bible was gold or something the way Dad and Mom treasure it and read it and love it. And besides that, you would think I was gold or something the way they fret over me and look out for me.”

What do your children think are the gold things in your life? It’s a good question for all of us because it will tell what is going to be gold in their lives. Jesus said, “*Where a man’s treasure is there will his heart be also.*” †

Bob Plunket preaches for the Lord’s church in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Christianity and the Home

Jim Poland

Being a Christian at home is a very tough assignment sometimes. The difference between what we know and what we perform leaves many doubts and guilt feelings at times.

But we must not let that deter us from trying and doing better, because nations and churches fall apart in their families. Building a Christian family takes a great deal of time. It is quicker to scream and yell at one another. It is easier to watch TV. Meeting a problem head-on and talking about it really takes a great amount of time and effort.

God never said it would be easy! But He did say it is possible! It is possible for a Christian couple to teach forgiveness by being forgiving, to teach love by being loving to each other, self-worth by showing and demanding respect, to teach faith by showing trust, and to teach communication by listening and talking.

When Israel entered the land of Canaan, God told them to concentrate on their homes (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

It is in the homes that nations and churches get their strength. God-centered homes are a priority in every part of life. God's eternal purposes and blessings are carried out from homes built upon God's revealed will, the Bible.

The home was created by God when man was created (Genesis 2). Jesus taught that the home is to be protected against corruption. To those who questioned God's arrangement by their man-made interpretations, Jesus said, "...*Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?* So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to Him, "*Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?*" He said to them, "*Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it*

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was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 19:4-9).

The home, as God has commanded it, is to be in the image of the church of Christ to Christ (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Unless our homes are built upon faithfulness, love, loyalty, and submission to God and His Word and each other, we will not learn to be the church of Christ. The future of the church and salvation of souls depends upon marriages built God’s way! †

Jim Poland is a gospel preacher working with the church of Christ in Bona, Missouri, USA.

Heart-Broken

To day I’m so heart-broken, I don’t know what to write.
If you must serve our country, you want be home to night.
Your room will be empty, when I awake at dawn,
I cannot find you sleeping, to-morrow you’ll be gone.

Why do they take you from me? Oh, Lord! Please hear my prayers,
Return him to me safely if he must serve these years.
I love you, son, I love you, I’ll miss your words, your smiles.
While you share them with others, away so many miles.

I’ll pray to God our Father; He’ll know just where you are.
Prayers through him can reach to you, though you may travel far.
Our arms have reached to hold you, to day you’ve said good-bye,
You’re on your way to somewhere, while I sit here and cry.

Eva Nell Brown Naramore

God Is The Strength of My Heart

Psalm 73:26

J.A. Thornton

Introduction

- A. God's omnipotence should awe us.
- B. We must learn to tap into His strength

I. God Is My Strength

- A. We must not trust in our own strength (Jeremiah 9:23,24).
- B. Such is foolish (Proverbs 28:25,26; Psalms 52:1,2).
- C. God is our strength (Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 41:10).
- D. I am weak, He is strong (Psalm 73:26; 1 Corinthians 1:27).
- E. God's strength is perfect (2 Corinthians 12:9,10; 13:4).
- F. Faith and God's strength (Hebrews 11:33,34).
- G. We can be strong (Ephesians 3:16; 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1).

II. Adapting God's Strength

- A. Let word and meditation be acceptable (Psalm 19:14).
- B. Putting our lives in His hands (Psalm 31:13-15).
- C. He gives strength to His people.
- D. Jehovah is my strength (Isaiah 12:1,2).
- E. The strength of faith (Hebrews 11:11).
- F. By taking courage (Acts 4:13).
- G. Pray for boldness (Ephesians 6:18,19).
- H. Strength from God's rich supply (Ephesians 3:15-17).
- I. Peter's prayer (1 Peter 5:10).

III. Strength in Weakness and Difficulties

- A. God has chosen weak things to confound the mighty (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).
- B. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).
- C. In weakness made strong (Hebrews 11:33,34).
- D. In Him we live and move (Acts 17:27,28).
- E. "*I can do all things...*" (Philippians 4:13).



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CHARTS AND OUTLINES

Some Things a Sinner Learned Too Late Luke 16:19-31

Curtis Camp

I. Torment Begins At Death

- A. Man is in God's image (Genesis 1:26); therefore, spirit. Man is immortal – eternal – personality – never dies.
 - 1. Read of mortal and immortal bodies (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:53), but not of mortal and immortal soul.
 - 2. He was conscious, recognized, remembered. He was in “torments”. “I am tormented in this flame.” It was “a place of torment.”
 - 3. Death is not a “dreamless sleep”.

II. Torment is a Reality

- A. Would have a hard time trying to convince the rich man that the torment was not real. He was enduring the flame and was suffering.
- B. Why argue about what hell is? Why try to take the fires out of hell? New Testament still talks about this place.
 - 1. Matthew 25:41
 - 2. Matthew 25:30
 - 3. Revelation 14:11
 - 4. Mark 9:43-48



CHARTS AND OUTLINES

5. I don't intend to go there anyway. Don't want to go.
- C. The torment he endured then, he still endures tonight

III. It Was Too Late to Pray

- A. Prayer is so often abused – a waste of time, actually.
- B. “Father Abraham, have mercy on me.” “Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” “I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou *wouldst send him to my father's house...*”
 1. Not a single desire was granted
 2. Hosea 13:14
 3. Isaiah 55:6,7
- C. Every request would have been granted in life.

IV. Too Late to be Mission-Minded

- A. “For I have five brothers...” Luke 16:27,28.
- B. He knew what they needed, Luke 16:30.
- C. We know the same but do not believe we'll be lost if we do not do them.

V. There is No Second Chance

- A. “...there is a great gulf fixed; so that they...”

VI. Warnings Come From God's Word

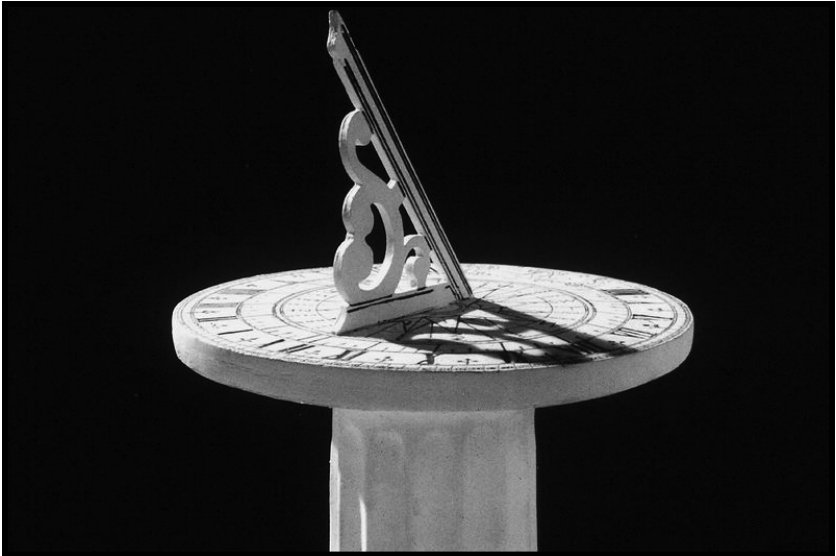
- A. “If they will not hear Moses and the prophets... they have Moses and the prophets... they would not hear though one...”
- B. Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10,12; John 12:48

VII. Even a Child of God Can be Lost

- A. This man a Jew – “Father Abraham” – “Son, remember...”
- B. Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 10:22; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19,20; 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:13-24

Curtis Camp preached the Word of God for many years, primarily in Texas.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Revelation 2:10



The Sundial of Ahaz

Maxie B. Boren

Three great lessons can be gleaned from the context of 2 Kings 20:1-11. First, God is gracious in giving warning of impending death, and obviously, we are to make ready. To Hezekiah, He said, “*Set your house in order, for you shall die...*” (verse 1). That admonition to the good king of long ago is equally relevant to us today. Our lives on this earth are brief, at best, and God’s Word so informs us of this fact (see James 4:14 and 1 Peter 1:24). We, too, need to be setting our houses

in order, making sure that everything over which we have control is attended, especially matters of a spiritual nature, because death is coming. “*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27). Recognizing the inevitable, the psalmist prayed, “*Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*” (Psalm 90:12).

Secondly, God hears and answers the prayers of His faithful ones, and Hezekiah had indeed been faith-

TEXTUAL STUDIES

ful (read 2 Kings 18:3-6). As 20:2-6 relates, Hezekiah prayed to God earnestly, with tears. The Heavenly Father heard the pleading of His servant and answered him in the affirmative by granting him fifteen more years of life.

Throughout the sacred pages of the Bible we are taught that God hears and answers the prayers of His people (note such Scriptures as Psalms 34:17-19; 65:2; 86:1-7; 145:18,19; Proverbs 15:29; Hebrews 4:16; James 5:16; etc). Thus we are instructed to pray (Matthew 6:6-15; Colossians 4:2; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; etc).

However, it must be noted that God doesn't always answer us in the affirmative. Sometimes He does not grant our requests, as in the case of the apostle Paul, recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" and asked God three times that it depart from him, but God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." We must accept the fact that God knows what we don't know and can see where we can't see, and therefore, His answer to some of our prayers may well be negative, for our own good. One thing we know, that God blesses His children who pray to Him in accordance with His will (Matthew 7:7-11; 1 John 5:14,15). Any time of the day or night we can go to our Father in prayer with full assurance of faith that He will hear

us and answer in keeping with what is best for us.

Thirdly, God's great power was clearly demonstrated. Hezekiah asked the prophet Isaiah if there would be a sign given, assuring him the Lord would grant him life. The prophet evidently gave the king a choice, relating to the sundial of Ahaz... "do you want the shadow to go forward ten degrees, or go backward?" Hezekiah reasoned that it would be more difficult for the shadow to go back ten degrees, so that is what he requested. Indeed, God "brought the shadow ten degrees backward" (see verses 8-11). Beloved, whether it was the ten degree change on the sundial of Ahaz, the sun and moon standing still during the days of Joshua (Joshua 10:12-14), or no rain upon the earth for three and a half years through the prayer of Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1,41-45; James 5:17,18), it is evident that God is the Supreme Sovereign of this universe, and His power is infinite! No wonder Paul inquired, "If God is for us, who can be against us" (Romans 8:31)? We should thus say with Jesus, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Read Ephesians 3:14-21. †

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"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Nahum – The Almost Forgotten Book

Charles Box

One small, almost forgotten book in the Old Testament is the Book of Nahum. Nahum should be studied along with the Book of Jonah. It tells what happened to Nineveh when they failed to keep their promises to God. Nahum begins with the truths earlier expressed in Exodus 34:6,7. *“And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.’”* Some of the lessons learned from the book of Nahum are:

God is a jealous God. *“God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies”* (Nahum 1:2). God is pictured both as jealous and avenger.

God is a patient God, but there is a limit to His patience. *“The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet”* (Nahum 1:3).

God is so powerful that sinners cannot stand before Him. *“Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him”* (Nahum 1:6). These words are much like those written by Isaiah. *“What will you do in the day of punishment, and in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help”* (Isaiah 10:3)?

God is a God who expects us to keep our promises. *“...O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; He is utterly cut off”* (Nahum 1:15). During the days of Jonah the people of Nineveh promised to leave sin and serve God. They did not keep their promises, and the pay was destruction (Romans 6:23).

Nahum teaches us that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe and our only hope for deliverance. Only our sin stands in the way of many blessings from the hand of our Benevolent Creator. †

Charles Box preaches for the Walnut Street congregation in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Here I Raise My Ebenezer

Charles Pugh III

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us’” (1 Samuel 7:12).

In an earlier battle, the Philistines had defeated Israel and had captured the ark of God (1 Samuel 4:2,10,11). The removal of the ark signified God’s displeasure with Israel because of her (Israel’s) sin (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25; 3:13). *“The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured”* (1 Samuel 4:22). After seven months, the ark was returned to Israel (1 Samuel 7:1-3). Israel repented of its sin, and Samuel prayed and made an offering to the Lord (1 Samuel 7:4-9). As Samuel was offering up this sacrifice, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, but the Lord brought confusion to the ranks of the Philistine army. As a result, the Philistines were defeated by Israel that day (1 Samuel 7:10). With deep gratitude to God for His salvation, Samuel took a stone, set it up, and named it Ebenezer (Stone of Help) and said, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” Ebenezer is a memorial to three great things.

1. A Word for the Past (Gratitude). Samuel said, “Thus far the Lord has helped us...” We have come this far because of Him.

2. A Word for the Present (Assurance). *“God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).

3. A Word for the Future (Hope). God’s presence and help remain with us as we are faithful to Him and do not depart into apostasy (Proverbs 3:5,6; Hebrews 13:5,6).

Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by thy help I’ve come,
And I hope by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home.

— Robert Robinson



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5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

What Must I Add To My FAITH?

2 Peter 1:7-11

Paula Bates

1. 2 Peter 1:5 – "... Giving all diligence, add to your faith _____."
2. 2 Peter 3:18 – "But grow in grace, and in the _____ of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
3. 2 Peter 1:6 – "And to knowledge _____ and to _____ and patience _____."
4. Hebrews 10:36 – "For ye have need of _____, that after ye have done the will of _____, ye might receive the _____."
5. 2 Peter 1:7 – "And to godliness _____ and to brotherly kindness _____."
6. 2 Peter 1:11 – "... an _____ shall be ministered unto you _____ into the everlasting _____ of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ."

-
- ~~ANSWERS~~
- | | |
|----|---|
| 6. | Entrance, abundantly, kingdom |
| 5. | Brotherly kindness, charity (love) |
| 4. | Patience, God, promise |
| 3. | Temperance, temperance, patience, godliness |
| 2. | Knowledge |
| 1. | Virtue |

ANSWERS:

Where Are the Dead?

J.C. Choate

The Bible teaches that we will all die or put off the physical body at the second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). We are also told that “It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). The apostle Paul declared, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Perhaps the biggest question at this point would be, “What happens to one between the time he dies and the judgment?” In other words, during that time, where does one abide? Is he still alive? Is he conscious? Or does he remain in the tomb or the place of the dead in an unconscious state?

In Luke 16:19-31, Christ tells the account of the rich man and Lazarus. He says that both of these men died. The poor man’s soul was taken by angels to Abraham’s bosom or to the place of the righteous dead, which is described as being Paradise (Luke 23:43). However, the rich man’s soul went to hell and was tormented in the flames. He cried out to Father Abraham to have mercy on him and to send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. Abraham reminded him that in his life he had received all of the good things that the physical world had to offer but Lazarus received the evil things, or had done without. Then he went on to say that now Lazarus was being comforted while the rich man was tormented.

It was explained to the rich man that it would be impossible, anyway, for Lazarus to come to him since there was a great gulf between the two and that no one could pass from one place to the other. Then, the rich man requested that Abraham send Lazarus to his father’s house to warn his five brothers not to come to that place of torment. Abraham told him that they had Moses and the prophets to whom they could listen, and if they would not hear them, they would not listen even though one rose from the dead to warn them.

But the rich man was already in torment here, and Lazarus was already in Paradise. What about a resurrection (John 5:28,29), and a general resurrection for all? There is no problem here. Just as in this life, if a murderer is caught, he is kept in prison until his judgment day and the time he is sentenced to pay for his crime. The Scriptures, therefore, teach that when the righteous man or the faithful Christian dies, he will go immediately to Paradise or the place of

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the righteous dead. It further teaches that when the wicked person dies, he will go immediately to torment or to the place of the wicked dead.

When the Lord returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16), all will hear His voice and the bodies will be resurrected from the grave to be reunited with their spirits that have been kept in Paradise or in torment. They will appear before the Lord to be judged and sentenced (Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31-46). Finally, the record says in the words of Jesus that the wicked or unsaved “... *shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*” (Matthew 25:46).

These Scriptures tell us that those who die go into Paradise or torment, according to whether they are saved or lost, and that they remain conscious of who they are, of what they have done, and of others in Paradise as well as on the earth. When the last trumpet sounds and the resurrection takes place, all will be judged and will be sentenced by the righteous Judge to an eternal hell with the devil and his angels, or to live with the Lord in heaven with all of the saved forevermore.

Death and the judgment will be final and one's destination will be eternal. There will be no second chance, and neither will the wicked simply be annihilated. The soul will live on forever, either in heaven or hell. Jesus warned, “... *when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ... And these [the evil] will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*” (Matthew 25:31-34,46).

My friend, we have today to prepare to meet the Lord and to get our soul ready to live in heaven with Him. “*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Please do not neglect your salvation and be lost eternally.



J.C. Choate was founder and Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* until his death in 2008.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

What About Blood Transfusions?

Albert Gardner

Several years ago, the newspapers carried the story that Scott Hackert died after an auto accident while a court order was being issued for a blood transfusion. The man and his family were Jehovah's Witnesses, and claimed it would be against the law of God, citing, among other verses, Acts 15:19,20. *"Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."*

I would not for one second question the sincerity of Jehovah's Witnesses in general or these people in particular. One may refuse a blood transfusion for several reasons. It could be personal, financial, or medical, but they refused it for religious reasons.

Circumcision was an issue in the early church, so much so, that some said, *"Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved"* (Acts 15:1). Paul says, *"in Jesus Christ neither circumcision*

availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Though one might accept circumcision for physical reasons, he sins if he does it for religious reasons.

Eating meats which had been offered to idols will not make one better or worse spiritually (1 Corinthians 8:8), though it might affect him physically. There are different reasons why a person might do a thing, but when he puts a belief or practice on a religious basis, there must be Scriptures which authorize it.

The Bible says nothing about blood transfusions, and those verses used to support objection are misapplied. God says, *"Don't eat blood,"* and gives as the reason, *"for the life is in the blood"* (Genesis 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:23; Leviticus 17:14). It is for this same reason the apostles and elders wrote not to eat things that had been strangled (Acts 15:20).

If having a blood transfusion is "eating blood," then of course, it is sinful, for Scripture clearly forbids eating blood. But how could one

BIBLE QUESTIONS

ever conclude they are the same? Eating blood is a practice in some cultures today, and it is so repugnant that I do not care to describe it. Without doubt this practice is sinful.

God gave many directions to the Jews that had to do with proper eating and general hygienic practices long before science knew anything about germs and other health factors. This strengthens our faith in the Bible writers, the inspiration of the Bible, and knowing the guiding hand of God was behind it all.

The Jews were told that if they would obey God He would put "*none of these diseases upon them*" which were upon the heathens. We do not question the command not to eat blood, even if we don't know or understand all the reasons. Though the Old Testament was taken away at the cross, New Testament teaching forbids eating blood. However, a blood transfusion is not eating blood. For one to say so does not make it so. †

Albert Gardner is a Gospel preacher living in Kennett, Missouri, USA.

Tired of Sin?

Ernest S. Underwood

Have you ever been so tired that you just wanted lie down and rest for a long time? Just as one's physical body can become weary with the toils of labor, so the soul can become weary of the heavy burden of sin.

Jesus gave the answer. It is found in Matthew 11:28-30. Listen to His words of invitation to every soul that is tired of sin and the burden it causes one to carry: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*"

Notice please, that the one who comes to Him, comes at His invitation; he takes His yoke; he submits to Him. His burden is light. It is His rest one enters.

QUESTION: Have you placed your burden of sin on Him by your obedience to His Word, or are you still in the clutches of denominationalism? Read 2 Corinthians 13:5. †

HEY, YOU KIDS!

Have you ever wondered if God's grace was enough for you? Have you ever done something wrong, knew it was a sin, and kept right on doing it? It doesn't have to be murder or anything that serious, just a little lie or something slight. I have.

But why? Well, that's simple enough. I am a sinful little creature who is in need of much correction. Now that's not to say that I'm better or worse than anyone else, I'm not worried about other peoples' correction, I have enough on my own plate. But why? If I'm a Christian and I study the Bible like I should, then how am I so wrong, not only through



What Goes In

Alex Gibson

mistakes but willingly wrong as well? That calls for multi-sided answers and I intend to work on them. So where to start? Ah, I've got it.

Your body is a wonderful thing. Note here that I refer to the body as a "thing" because you are not a body with a soul; you are a soul that has a body. The body heals itself and is capable of telling you when it's hungry and when it needs to sleep, when it's hurt and many other things. The feelings of joy and pain can be expressed through the body, as well as fear and courage. And these are all noble things.

On the other hand the body has desires that, unless kept in check, can become real problems. It's easy enough to give an example of this: When boys first start noticing girls, they want to be with their sweet hearts, and too much time together can lead to serious temptations.

Or if you happen to have a particularly large appetite, then it's easy to slip into binge eating. Or if you're worried about your looks, starving yourself might be the direction you go. The point is that the body must be

HEY, YOU KIDS!

kept in check because you're never too old for your desires to hurt you, or too young, for that matter.

One way to keep the body in check is simply eating right and getting enough rest and exercise. If you don't get enough sleep, you won't be able to do your work well. Not only that, but you are giving the body less time to heal and the mind less time to rest. For exercising, it's good to get out and run or swim. Your level of health and energy will go up, and then you can do more with your day. And as for eating habits, have a balanced diet. The Good Lord made a lot of different foods to be enjoyed, so by all means use those taste buds, but keep it more on the healthy side than dealing in junk. Your body will thank you for it, down the road.

But why spend all this time talking about the body? Because it is a source of your temptations. See the Book of James for details. And a healthy body houses a healthy mind.

Ok. Moving on.

This is the other point I wanted to make. The mind is the second part of the equation here. The body may have sway over your choices, based on cravings, but the mind is just as important, if not more so. Have you ever noticed a change in yourself when you're around your friends? Or what about when you've been at a camp for a week or so? Did those

associations affect your thinking and your personality?

Statistically, it takes 21 days to break a habit and a little over two weeks to form one. So that means your actions and thoughts can be groomed. Don't believe me? That's what happened to me in basic training. The first three weeks were the most harsh because the intention of the military is to break people of bad habits to and teach them new ones. And because there's nothing around you for gauging the changes, it's very difficult to tell how much you're being affected until you're done.

It's much the same with the things you're exposed to every day. For example, do you notice that when you watch certain TV shows, you start using lines from them, or thinking about the episodes more often? Believe me, it happens. I've heard everyone use one-liners from popular shows nearly every day since I got into high school.

The things you say and do are affected by what you read, watch, and hear. If you listen to music that has a lot of slurs or racist remarks, you'll find yourself making those types of remarks. In fact, I personally feel that music has the most profound impact on young people because they can sing anytime, and so it is easy to get songs stuck in your head.

If you watch a lot of violent

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programming, you may be less opposed to violence than if you didn't. If you hang around a sarcastic bunch, you'll turn out to be more sarcastic.

We as people need practice and training at what we do and, in order to get it, we have to be exposed to the same stuff over and over again. Hearing someone use foul language once in awhile won't train you to curse, but constant bombardment will make it easier for such words to slip into your vocabulary without you even noticing it.

Thank God the reverse is true, too. If you keep your mind flooded with good things, then you will be more likely to do good. This is part of the reason why we are told, *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things"* (Philippians 4:8).

If that sounds boring to you, then the odds are you haven't explored all the good things out there. For example, if you look in the Bible, you'll find that David danced for joy, or that Christ enjoyed sharing a meal with friends. Laughing and singing have always been good things, and there can even be satisfaction in work. Remember the proverb: *"A*

merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Life should not be about being bogged down with rules and regulations, though those are there to keep you from being hurt. We need to focus on the blessings, such as good family, or food, or peaceful rest. Health is also something to enjoy, with a positive outlook.

Actually, if you want the best advice on how to enjoy life, you should read Psalms and Proverbs as those outline a lot of the useful information for health and goodness. Then the single most important thing to do is to apply what you learn. Every experience is a chance to learn, and you should always take something from them. You experience things every day of your life, don't you? Then you should learn something from those experiences every day of your life. The most important lessons involve learning what to do, or to avoid doing, to foster a better relationship with God so as to enjoy your life to the fullest. Didn't Jesus say, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10)?

If you read the books I've suggested and take some time to try to understand them, it will help. As usual if you have any questions or feedback let me know. God bless. Alex ✚

Alex Gibson's email is zex1@hotmail.com

HEY, YOU KIDS!

Why Do We Know What We Know?

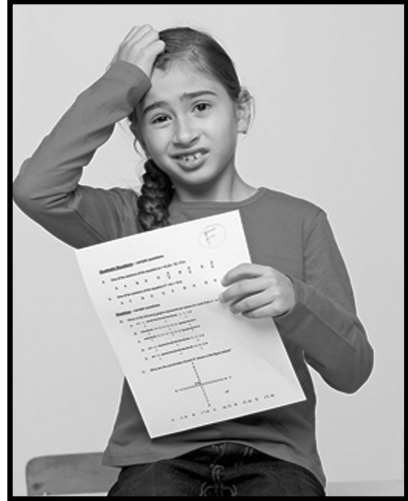
Jason Zuehlke

At first glance, what kind of title is that? Let's consider for a moment, *how do we get to know what we know?*

We may begin to think about how we were educated in school. Each year teachers would get up in front of the class and teach us, covering a wide array of subjects. Maybe they thought we would use what they were teaching, but if you were like me, you might not have seen a need for most of it. Unfortunately, every teacher thought it was important because they all gave tests to make sure I was paying attention.

Maybe we think of our parents telling us what to do, and what not to do. Maybe another relative or friend would talk to us about a subject and we remember learning something from them. Perhaps our knowledge comes from listening to gossip and reading "blogs" or newspaper columns. Or do we listen to what the newscasters and commentators broadcast? It is easy to see that there are plenty of sources to get to "know something".

So why do we need to ponder this question, why do I know what I know? The answer is simple, Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the



truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

What is it that we have learned? Remember that we learn from those around us. Have we been led by the worldly desires and misconceptions, or have we surrounded ourselves with the truth?

So who do we hang around? As Christians, do we follow the direction given in Ephesians 4:21-24: "*If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows: corrupt according to*

HEY, YOU KIDS!

the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which we created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” If we surround ourselves with other Christians, this process of growth is made easier:

I think we know the importance of truth in our world. Society today seems to get a thrill out of creating suspense and having the theory of “anything goes” just so “I” can get ahead. Truth, in the everyday walk of life for so many, seems to be in short supply, if they keep any truth about them at all. How is it then, Jesus would say in John 8:32, *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* How can we know the truth if we are raised in a world of sin? Let’s look to John 8:31: *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”*

The truth IS still out there; we have to hear the truth, verify that what we hear is truth, believe the truth, and then change our behavior to harmonize our lives with the truth. Ephesians 4:14 admonishes us to take personal responsibility for what we believe (*“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”*). We are also instructed in verse 15 to *“speak the truth in love”*

to everyone ... Are we doing this daily to share with others what we know, and to help them learn?

Where does this idea of knowing what we know fit in? Acts 17 shows us two groups of people in relation to the Truth. One group does not accept the Truth and will fight against it (Acts 7:5: *“But the Jews who were not persuaded becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people”*), while others will verify what is being said and will accept the Truth as the Truth (Acts 7:4 *“And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”* and Acts 17:11 *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”*).

How do we relate to Ephesians 4 and Acts 17? What do you know? What is the source of your knowledge? And what are you doing with it? †

Jason Zuelkhe is IT Assistant at Planters Bank & Trust Company in Indianola, MS, and a Christian and youth leader in the Lord’s church, converted through the efforts of Gene and Madolyn Gibson with the Student Center at the Mississippi Delta Community College, Moorhead, MS, USA.

BIBLE FIND

Bonnie Rushmore

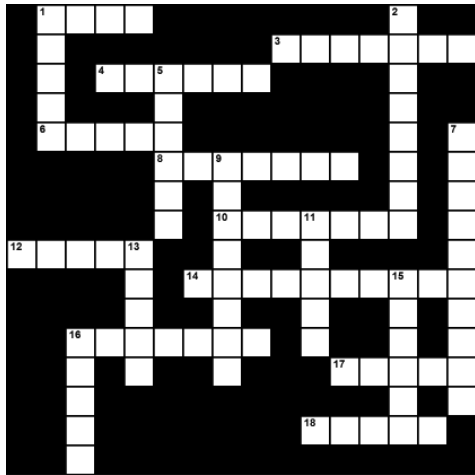
Miriam

Across

1. Miriam led the women in _____ after they crossed the Red Sea.
3. God caused Miriam to have _____.
4. Miriam died at _____.
6. Miriam volunteered to get a _____ for the baby.
8. Miriam and Aaron spoke _____ Moses' wife.
10. Moses _____ with God to heal Miriam.
12. Name Miriam's father.
14. God called Miriam, Aaron and Moses to come to the _____.
16. Miriam _____ over her baby brother as he was hidden in the basket at the river's edge.
17. Name Miriam's brother.
18. God was _____ with Miriam and Aaron.

Down

1. How many days was Miriam shut out of the camp?
2. Name Miriam's mother.
5. God said, "I speak to prophets in _____".
7. Miriam was a _____.
9. God _____ in a pillar of cloud in the door of the tabernacle.
11. Name Miriam's brother.
13. God said, "I speak to Moses, mouth to _____".
15. God called Miriam and Aaron to come _____.
16. Leprosy caused Miriam's skin to turn _____.



He Brought Him to Jesus

Kerry Holton

All Christians want to lead others to Christ. However, often, they do not know how to begin.

It's time to go to school. Our instructor is the apostle Andrew. He led a soul to Christ, and here is John's account of how it happened: "*He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus*" (John 1:41,42).

There are several key points in this conversion account that will help Christians lead others to Jesus.

- Go to associates first. Andrew approached his brother, a family member. It makes good sense to focus our attention on family members, friends, neighbors, and work associates. They are people we love. They love and trust us. They are people with whom we have cultivated a relationship. This is important. Evangelism begins with a relationship. Each of us has a network of friends and family with whom we could talk about spiritual matters. Someone has said, "Your greatest opportunity for evangelism is your deepest relationship."
- Share your experience. What did Andrew do? He merely told his brother what he had discovered. There was nothing complicated about it. "*We have found the Messiah,*" he said. Remember what Jesus told the demoniac He had healed? "*Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you*" (Luke 8:39). What has Jesus done for you? What benefits do you enjoy because you are a Christian? These are things we should announce to others. If we are uncomfortable about telling the lost what God has done for us, we can practice on Christians.
- Bring people to Christ. Are you ever hesitant to enter an unfamiliar place where you do not know anyone? Sure. We all are. It can be an awkward and frightening experience. However, isn't it different if we know someone there, or if a friend accompanies us? One of the best methods of evangelism is bringing our friends to worship with us, or to some other Christian activity. Many who would not come on their own may be waiting for an invitation to come with us.

Each of us can lead some soul to Christ. Andrew shows us that it is not as difficult as we may have imagined. †

Kerry Holton formerly taught Bible for several years at York College, but he is now working for the Lord in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

The New Testament Church: God's Tool for Evangelism

Jimmy Young

One of the major purposes of the Christian life is that we shine as lights in a lost world. It is lost without Christ. The Great Commission requires each generation to reach the lost.

The Scriptures clearly teach that all the saved are in the church of Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Hebrews 12:22ff; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:10, 2:1-22). God can't use those outside the church for evangelism. We cannot hire a mercenary army to accomplish God's will. God's tool for evangelism is the New Testament church.

The world as a whole is lost; we must be busy reaching it (Romans 1:18-3:31; Ephesians 2:12,14-16). Do we really believe this? What are your thoughts of the world's condition when we sing songs concerning the Great Commission, or Judgment?

Our purpose is not accomplished until we reach out to every soul in every generation (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). This will not be accomplished unless we "go" and "teach" the lost! God's plan was for His people to reach all the lost (Acts 1:8).

Christians are to do the work of reaching the lost. Again, the Great Commission bears this out. Listen to the apostle Paul. *"For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, [field-J.Y.], ye are God's building"* (1 Corinthians 3:9). Peter puts it this way: *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15). We must not forget that our souls are involved as well as the souls of those we must be trying to reach. It is up to us to "teach" and "uphold" the truth. This is indeed a work (Philippians 2:12-16; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

This requires from us a "pure" life as co-laborers with God (Ephesians 5:25-27; Romans 12:1-2; Acts 5:1-11; Galatians 5:19-23; John 15:1-8). Please take time to study these verses. This requires growth on our part. We aren't going to reach out to the lost if we haven't grown (matured) ourselves.

We must not delay in our responsibilities of going with God's

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Word to the lost. It is so easy to squander opportunities, time, talents, and money on mundane things and keep the Gospel from a lost world. God still requires us to always be His tool for evangelism (Romans 1:14-16).

It should be our purpose and goal to be God's tool and "*gladly spend and be spent*" (2 Corinthians 12:15). How about you? †

Jimmy Young works with the Nettleton congregation in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

WHOSE PREACHER ARE YOU?

Danny Boggs

Last week we were blessed to visit with many dear family members and friends. One of the friends was Garrett, age 7. We have known Garrett since he was a baby. Ever since he started talking, Garrett has been known for his forthright way with words.

Garrett goes to school with a friend named Zach. Zach has been to Bible class and worship with Garrett, but he generally finds other things on Sunday mornings a lot more fun. One Monday morning Garrett and Zach were riding to school together. Zach had gone hunting with his dad Sunday morning while Garrett and his family gathered with the church; Garrett informed Zach: "We're supposed to want to go to heaven, and we learn about going to heaven in Bible class. I'm supposed to tell you about it. So there — I told you!"

Why was it so important for Garrett to tell Zach and for you and me to tell others? "I'm Zach's preacher," Garrett told his parents one day. "What do you mean?" they asked. "Zach doesn't go to church and have a preacher, so I'm his preacher." Whose preacher are you?

Risen from the dead, Jesus charged disciples: "*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15,16). †

Be someone's preacher!

Danny Boggs preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



The Book of Acts covers the first thirty-two years of the Christian mission (A.D. 30-62), and chapter 1, verse 8 serves as the outline of this early “history of missions” document. The testimony of Christ was to be proclaimed, beginning in Jerusalem, to “*all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*”. Acts follows this outline as the Gospel is first preached in Jerusalem (2:1ff.), then spreads to the surrounding region of Judea (2:14; 5:16; 8:1; 9:31), further north to Samaria (8:1,5,25), and beyond (9:2ff.). When Acts closes, Christianity has extended as far as

Around the World in Three Decades

Kevin L. Moore

Italy (28:11-16), but no definitive record is given of the Gospel having reached areas west of Rome, east of Syria, or south of Palestine. However, since the Book of Acts was not intended to give an intricately detailed account of every single event that occurred in the early church (cf. Galatians 1:15–2:14; 2 Corinthians 11:24-29), the dissemination of the Gospel appears to have been much broader than a mere surface reading of the text initially indicates.

The number of disciples in Jerusalem in A.D. 30 rapidly grew from 120 (1:15) to 3,000+ (2:41), to 5,000+ (4:4), and more (5:14; 6:7). Prior to Stephen’s martyrdom, it has been estimated that the number of believers in this city may have reached as many as 20,000 or even more. Thousands of Jewish

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Christians “*from every nation under heaven*” dispersed from Jerusalem around A.D. 33, going “*everywhere preaching the word*” (2:5; 8:4). Twenty-four years later there were “myriads” (lit. ‘thousands upon thousands’) of Jews (not counting the numerous Gentiles) who were believers (21:20). While Luke focuses primarily on the missionary activities of Paul and his co-workers, who obviously had not gone everywhere themselves (cf. Romans 15:22-24), a host of other Christian missionaries were also actively going into all the world (cf., e.g., Acts 8:25,40; 11:19-21; 15:39; 18:24-28; etc.).

There are a number of localities mentioned in Acts where the Gospel was *definitely* preached, although no specific reference is made as to when or by whom this originally occurred, i.e. Galilee (9:31) and Cilicia (15:23); various parts of Syria (15:23), including Damascus (9:2,10); Cappadocia and Pontus (2:10; cf. 1 Peter 1:1); Bithynia (16:7; cf. 1 Peter 1:1); various cities of Asia Minor (19:10; cf. Colossians 1:2; 4:13-16; Revelation 1:11); Troas (16:8-11; 20:6-12); Cenchrea (18:18; cf. Romans 16:1); Crete (2:11; 27:7,8; cf. Titus 1:5); and Italy, including Puteoli and Rome (28:13-15). There are also places mentioned in Acts where the Gospel was *likely* preached, namely Arabia (2:11; cf. Galatians 1:17); African nations, like Egypt (2:10; 18:24), Lybia (2:10; cf.

11:20; 13:1), and Ethiopia (8:27,39); and the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and beyond, such as Parthia, Media, Elam, and Mesopotamia (2:9) — regions now called Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, etc.

There are also places not mentioned in Acts where the Gospel *definitely* spread, like Illyricum (Romans 15:19) — the country northwest of Macedonia, the southern part of which was Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10) — present day Croatia. Further, there was Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), although the location of this city is uncertain since different cities shared this same name in various places, including Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is possible that this particular Nicopolis was in Thrace (near the borders of Macedonia) or in Cilicia, but more likely in the province of Epirus in northwestern Greece. There are also places not mentioned in Acts where the Gospel *probably* reached, such as Spain (Romans 15:24,28; cf. Clement of Rome, *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 5.5-7).

General statements about the widespread distribution of the Gospel occur frequently in Scripture (e.g. Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). Around A.D. 57 Paul quoted Psalm 19:4 (about the universal testimony of God’s creation), which he applies to the worldwide preaching of the Gospel, particularly

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among the Jews (Romans 10:18). Some consider Paul's application to be somewhat exaggerated, and it is possible that he simply had in mind the known inhabited world of the Roman Empire (which in itself is quite impressive!). But, the fact that Christ had predicted that prior to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem "*this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world*" (Matthew 24:14) lends credence to a more straightforward interpretation of this passage. Apparently Paul felt that at least the areas of Palestine, Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia had been (or were being) sufficiently evangelized at this time (Romans 15:23).

One cannot escape the fact that the Gospel is universal in scope (Mark 16:15), and by A.D. 62 Paul affirmed that it had been diffused "*in all the world*" (Colossians 1:5,6). Hyperbole (exaggeration for the sake of emphasis) does not adequately describe Paul's language here, and whether this is understood simply as a "prophetic prolepsis" (anticipating future fulfillment) or an allusion to the whole Roman Empire, it is entirely plausible that the Gospel had literally been taken around the globe by this time.

At the beginning of the first century A.D., the entire population of the world is estimated at about 300 million. If the approximately 20,000 Christians of A.D. 33 each shared

the Gospel with one person per year, who in turn shared the Gospel with one more person each year and so on, it would have taken only about fourteen years to reach the entire population of the world! The extent of the Gospel's proclamation appears to have been much greater than what is specifically documented in the New Testament, and the incredibly widespread diffusion of the Christian movement in just three decades cannot be denied.

Our mighty God accomplished this amazing feat with our first-century brethren (Acts 14:27; 15:4; 21:19) without the modern conveniences of air travel, motorized vehicles, mass media, or advanced health care. What is keeping us from going into all the world with the Gospel today? We serve the same Lord and preach the same message and have the necessary resources to get the job done. Perhaps all we lack is the same level of conviction, commitment, and zeal. The time is now for God's people to step out in faith, both individually and collectively, and allow our powerful Creator to accomplish His will through us. "*The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*" (Luke 10:2). †

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Scriptural Structure of the Church

W. Douglass Harris

By structure we do not refer to a material building, but to the organization in local congregations, which is the only structure authorized in the New Testament. In the universal sense, Christ is the head of the church, and there is no other structure in this sense.

New Testament Teaching and Authorization

Careful study of the New Testament regarding the structure of the church reveals that it is independent, autonomous congregations when scripturally organized with elders (overseers), deacons, and evangelists. The first mention of elders in the New Testament church was of those at Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). Paul addressed his Philippians letter to the “bishops and deacons” of the church (Philippians 1:1). The qualifications and responsibilities for the men to serve as elders and deacons are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-16. There are four different terms used in

the New Testament which refer to the same office: elder, bishop, overseer, and pastor. In every instance where they already existed in a congregation, they are mentioned in the plural.

In a fully-organized, scriptural congregation, there are also deacons who assist and serve under the eldership. They have no oversight except that delegated to them by the elders. Their qualifications and responsibilities are located in the same passages stated above for the elders.

Work and Place of the Evangelist

Paul made it explicit in Titus 1:5 that evangelists’ work is to set in order the things that are lacking in the congregations and to appoint elders in every church. If a church is just beginning with new converts, time must be allowed for men to develop to serve in the capacity of elders and deacons. Other than the evangelizing, this is the second most important work of evangelists. The evangelist must remember that he has no more oversight than any other faithful men in the congregation. “Evangelistic oversight” is not sanctioned in the New Testament. Oversight resides in the eldership, not one man or one elder. True, the evangelist is an important and influential figure in the congregation, but his divinely-authorized work is to evangelize so as to encourage the growth of the

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congregation and to develop men who are spiritually and temperamentally qualified to serve as elders and deacons. With the passing of reasonable time and with proper growth, the aforementioned should take place. No congregation is completely scripturally organized until this occurs. †

W. Douglass Harris had been the editor of *Carribean Messinger* before his death in 2004.

The Church of Christ

- The Bible is its only guide
(Romans 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- It wears a biblical name
(Romans 16:16)
- It was established at the right place
(Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2)
- It was established at the right time
(Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2)
- It was established on the right foundation
(Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36)
- The saved are in it
(Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47)
- Its members are enrolled in Heaven
(Hebrews 12:23)
- Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands, including baptism
(Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

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The Growth of the First Church

“...and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly” (Acts 6:7).

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

The church established in Jerusalem was a growing church. The key to her growth is seen in Acts 2:42-47. The church fellowshiped, edified each other, worshiped, ministered, and evangelized.

Peter, who was present on Pentecost and knew first-hand of the growth of the church in her early days in Jerusalem, wrote a letter in his later years in which he captured how individual Christians are involved in that growth. He said, *“Each one should use whatever spiritual gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen”* (1 Peter 4:10,11).

Peter reveals:

1. **That each one has received a gift.** Spiritual gifts are abilities God gives to be used in His kingdom. Each has a work to do. Not all have the same gift, but each is important.
2. **The gifts are to be used to serve.** Each is a servant. Gifts are not an end in themselves. They are not possessed to bring pride or vainglory. They are to be used in service. When one possesses a servant’s heart, God will provide the gift.
3. **The exercise of our gift is a matter of stewardship.** We are trustees in charge of the Master’s business.
4. **Whether speaking or serving, all is to be done by the direction of the Word of God to the end that God is glorified.**

When you use the gift God has given you, **the church will grow** (Ephesians 4:16). **You** are the vital key to the increase of the body. You can help the church grow *warmer* through fellowship; *deeper* through discipleship; *stronger* through worship; *broader* through ministry, and *larger* through evangelism.

May God give us open *eyes to see*, open *hearts to feel*, and open *hands to serve*. †

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The Tie That Binds

Raymond Elliott

Perhaps the first thought that comes to your mind will be the beautiful hymn, “Blest Be the Tie”, but the title of this article is not taken from this song. It might seem odd, but the “tie” that I have reference to is the one that I wear around my neck on occasions. You see, the person who taught me how to tie a “half-Windsor knot” was an older brother in Christ who influenced me greatly when I was but a lad. He was a member of my home congregation in Summerville, Georgia.

Brother Julius Sprayberry was our song leader, and he often taught a Bible class on Sunday morning and/or Wednesday night. It was Christian men like him and brother Charles Cochran, along with several other Christian men and women, who influenced my life for good. The widows of brethren Sprayberry and Cochran (Thelma and Frances, respectively) still attend the South Commerce congregation in my hometown.

When I was a boy growing up in this small church there was no “youth

minister” as such, but the love and influence exerted upon the young people by the adult members guided us in the way of the Lord and gave us a real sense of belonging and security. We did not have a “full-time” preacher for many years, but the men of the congregation would lead us in our worship assemblies. In fact, one of the members, brother Roland Hemphill, baptized me when I was a lad of thirteen. These brothers and sisters in Christ were “just regular” members. It is a beautiful thing to witness members of a congregation fulfilling the thoughts found in Ephesians 4:15, 16: “*But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*” Professionalism was generally unknown among our congregations sixty years ago.

We now live in a mobile society, and families seemingly are always on

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the move from one location to another one, and often there is not a real sense of having a “home congregation” by many families today.

Over fifty years have passed since I left my home congregation and left for college. But I retain precious memories of the time we met in the American Legion Hall in downtown Summerville and later in the brick building that was constructed on South Commerce Street.

I have a warm feeling in my heart, and often tears will fill my eyes when I think of so many of those members who have gone to be with the Lord. I possess a deep sense of gratitude and debt to those godly men and women who loved me and encouraged me to live for Jesus and to preach the Gospel.

There was a time when Virginia and I lived in a small trailer on the campus of Alabama Christian College. When the church back home learned of our lack of money, they sent us a check in the amount of fifty dollars. It might as well have been a thousand dollars, for it provided food for us to eat. It was the love and compassion that motivated the gift that has always endeared the members in my heart. I have a real feeling of loyalty to my home congregation. I have returned for Gospel meetings and it was always a joy to see ‘old friends’ and to reminisce of years past. I

would love for all of our children and young people to have such fond memories of a “home congregation” and to know of their roots in spiritual matters. We owe a great deal to the “ordinary” members of the church who live faithfully and carry on the work in a local congregation.

I seldom tie my “tie” without thinking of brother Sprayberry who taught me how to tie the knot and who influenced me to live for Jesus Christ. And when I think of him I also remember fondly my home congregation. I firmly believe that God, by His infinite grace, will supply unto us the entrance “*into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:11), where there will never be a separation from those of His children we have known and loved in this life. Here are two stanzas from the beloved hymn that we often sing and that expresses my inward feelings.

Blest Be the Tie

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds*

Is like to that above.

When we asunder part,

It give us inward pain;

But we shall still be joined in heart,

And hope to meet again. †

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A Leader
Like Moses

E. Claude Gardner

“Leaders are born and not made” is a popular aphorism, but is not wholly true. Both aspects have a part in leaders.

Moses, a giant servant of God, was a successful leader of the Israelites. When Jehovah called him to lead, he responded favorably. Likewise, our Lord calls men and women to His service, and they should hasten to heed this opportunity.

Good leaders are essential in the church organization, in the pulpit, in teachers at all age levels, in personal work, and in hospitality and friendship. What qualities should these have to be a good leader if they are selected?

Moses exhibited qualities that he would need when God gave him a charge to lead. In his forty years of leadership, he was tested and tried, but God was with him to bring support and encouragement. When God called Moses at the “burning bush”, he demonstrated three positive qualities.

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the back of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.’ So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’ Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:1-6).

Moses was busy. At the time he was tending sheep. This work seemed inferior to his educational and cultural background. He had received the best

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of Egyptian education and opportunities and this seems that he worked in a condescending position. He was not too elitist for such hard work. He must have been a quick learner, for he learned the skill of taking a flock of sheep to the backside of the desert. The Bible describes his background to show his special privileges which he forfeits.

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:25-27).

God called a busy man. It is often said, “If you want anything done, go to a busy man, because the others don’t have time.” Leaders should be selected who are busy and know how to work. They are willing to “spend and be spent.” The success of their work may depend on whether they were “busy” at the time. Many retirees have learned to serve well and are good prospects for a leadership work.

Moses had curiosity. When he saw the burning bush that did not burn, he was curious enough to turn aside and investigate it. Curiosity is a mark of a capable leader. He or she keeps eyes open to all things in the environment. The leader will assess the unusual situation and then formulate a challenge that will make a successful plan. Dullards and complacent ones cannot be good leaders.

Shy people should come out of their shell and show an interest and love for all people of all social levels in society. In their book *Living Together in Knowledge*, Don and Jane McWhorter analyzed why some may “follow the path of flight. Efforts to run away from something that is hurting can take the form of shyness, constantly running oneself down, or even being overly agreeable.”

Moses quickly accepted God’s call. He said, *“Here am I.”* That is the spirit of any Christian who is asked to serve. It is the same attitude of the prophet Isaiah, who responded to God by declaring, *“Here am I; send me”* (Isaiah 6:8). God revealed that Moses was given the responsibility of leading the Children of Israel out of bondage. *“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Go in, tell Pharaoh King of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land’”* (Exodus 6:10).

God knew Moses’ name by calling it twice, *“Moses, Moses.”* God knows everyone’s name, and even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew

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10:30). Today when we are called to work for the Lord, God knows our name and whether we accept or renege.

Leadership Is Suffering

The dearth of leadership calls for solving this problem. Classes for youth and younger Christians should be taught and “groomed”. The growth of the church is hindered by a shortage of able leaders. Moses would be a proper example of where to find strong leaders — busy, curious, and ready to serve.

The epitaph of Moses is described in Deuteronomy 34:10-12;

‘But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.’ †

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Qualities Needed

Following are three qualities desperately needed in the Lord’s church today:

1. Members who will STANDFAST. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit (behave) you like men, be strong.” 1 Corinthians 16:13
2. Members who will HOLDFAST. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 1:13
3. Members who will be STEADFAST. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

In a day of compromise drifting, departing, and digression, the Lord’s church truly needs the above qualities in order to be what the Lord would have us to be and do what the Lord would have us to do.

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It's Not Ours to Name

Glenn Colley



So many good people in various religions have never questioned the names by which they or their church are called. Remember that what distinguishes the church of Christ from most religions is our determination to go back to the New Testament and restore the Christianity described there. Only then will we know we are pleasing Christ.

Colossians 3:17 says, *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”*

Shakespearian enthusiasts will recognize this famous quote: “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Is it true that there’s nothing in a name? Well, I don’t know about roses, but I know that names are very important in some other areas. On the front of my house, on my mailbox, I want no one’s name but mine. Furthermore, I would object to someone coming along and inventing a new name and putting it on my mailbox. That name represents the fact that that house is my house, Colley’s. Not Jones’, or Smith’s, or Brown’s, but Colley’s.

The same principle applies to the church. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the church is God’s house. The reason we call the church the church of Christ is because it’s His church. We sometimes refer to the church by other names, like “The body of Christ,” or “The church of God,” because God called it by these designations in the Bible. But I would never think of putting my name on His church. Furthermore, I wouldn’t think of inventing a name which I preferred over the ones in the Bible. That’s not my right, because it’s not my church. It is the Lord’s. †

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You Should Have Seen What Happened Sunday

Allen Webster

The view from the pulpit is often interesting. People are so used to watching unresponsive TV and computer screens that they forget preachers can see them! After a while, the unexpected becomes commonplace, and he is able to keep his composure, though “the walls come tumbling down”.

When Christians gather for worship on the Lord’s Day, something special happens. Their common bond is strengthened as in concert they pour out their hearts’ gratitude to their Savior. It is a time of worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2), rejoicing (Psalm 118:24), examination (2 Corinthians 13:5), and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47). It is the week’s beginning and the week’s highlight — nothing else done in the next hundred and fifty or sixty hours equals it. We understand why Paul once delayed a journey for seven days so he could worship the Lord on the Lord’s Day with the Lord’s people (cf. Acts 20:6,7).

People of all ages are usually present: babies, children, teens, young adults, families, empty-nest couples, senior saints, and widows/widowers. Each comes to express a common love for an uncommon God; each feels a universal thirst for eternal truth. While worship is formal and congregational, it is neither cold nor impersonal (in “spirit,” John. 4:24). Personalities are involved, and that can make it interesting. This past Lord’s Day we had an uncommon service. You should have seen what happened.

A BABY CRIED. Occasionally someone frowns when a child cries during services, but most of us smile. Good mothers (fathers) recognize the need to take a child out to avoid disturbing others, but we don’t want them to feel self-conscious. We are glad it happens! What if no baby had cried Sunday? It would have meant there were no babies, for all babies cry. No church wants to be that quiet. A tomb is quieter than a nursery, but who wants to worship in a cemetery! A church without children is a church with its best days behind instead of ahead. If no babies had cried Sunday, it might also have indicated that parents saw no need to train the next generation in the Lord’s

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way (Ephesians 6:4). Good parents want children to learn about God from their first Sunday on planet earth (cf. Matthew 18:1-3; 19:13,14). They do not want them to be able to remember the first time they came to worship. We know they'll eventually learn to be quiet, but for now, we're glad to hear them.

A SISTER LEFT EARLY FOR WORK. In a perfect world, all businesses would close so that every person could exalt the name of God in worship each Lord's Day (Psalm 34:3). It will be that way in heaven, but it is not that way on earth. Christians are sometimes forced to make decisions. This sister had to be at work before the service ended...what to do? She could have skipped the service and told others that she "had to work". She could have slept in, had plenty of time to get ready, left in time to avoid traffic, and got a bite to eat before her shift. However, she chose to get up early, be in Bible class, sing God some songs, open her heart to Him in prayer, thank Him for Christ's sacrifice during communion, give Him part of last week's check, and listen to His Word. She sat toward the back so as not to disturb others when she got up a few minutes before the sermon ended. Few saw her "sermon on priorities" (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1,2) as the preacher did.

PAGES RUSTLED. As the herald "*preached the word*" (2 Timothy 4:2), hearers "*searched the scriptures to see whether those things were so*" (Acts 17:11). Far from offending him, it was music to his ears. Jesus found "*the place where it was written*" (Luke 4:17), and so should we. We joke that our favorite words in a sermon are "in conclusion", but we find most Christians thirsty for the Word (1 Peter 2:2) and "*hungering after righteousness*" (Matthew 5:8). They bring their Bibles, read their Bibles, mark their Bibles, memorize their Bibles, and live by their Bibles.

A SISTER NODDED. No one except the preacher probably noticed, but a faithful sister nodded in agreement with a sermon point. She would not speak out to say "amen" like her husband (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:1), but she encouraged the preacher just as much without saying a word. "Nods" also help others in the audience to know that the sermon is expressing both the preacher's convictions and those of other Christians.

A CHILD TOOK NOTES. Any parent knows that "out of the mouths of babes" come profound statements. Often "a little child has led" God's people (cf. Isaiah 11:6). Most churches can point to some young people whose example is worth imitating by those much older (1 Timothy 4:12). Last Sunday, a child was interested enough to take notes (cf. 1 Timothy 3:15). There is nothing so unusual about that — when a visual aid is used (old time sheet charts, or modern PowerPoint presentations), little eyes are always paying attention,

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and little hands are often copying those words down. They may not yet fully comprehend these concepts, but the seed is planted, the foundation is laid, the base color is on the canvas. One day fruit will ripen, the structure will stand, and the painting will be perfected. These very notes may become fresh classes and sermons for another generation of children. Some in pulpits now still occasionally use notes written with childish letters on yellowing paper. These have been “born-again” into lessons for those who were not born when the notes were first taken. The truth never ages; it only needs recycling.

A CHRISTIAN WORSHIPPED FOR THE FIRST TIME. Baptized on Tuesday, a young man offered God acceptable worship for the first time Sunday. God cleansed him from sin, set him in the church, and watched with interest as he bowed his soul in adoration (Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; James 4:24). If the Lord delays His return, and his days are prolonged, that is probably only one out of 10,000 times he will offer public worship to his Creator (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25), but it will likely never mean more to God or him than this first service. It was a beautiful step on a long journey...a first note in a grand symphony.

THOSE FROM “EIGHT TO EIGHTY” COMMITTED TO READ THEIR BIBLES. Each year, we encourage every member to commit to reading the whole Bible in 365 days. On Sunday, more than a hundred agreed to do so. The youngest is just under eight years old and will read the Bible for the first time. Perhaps this is the first of fifty or more times this mind will have the cleansing Water of Life purify its recesses. The oldest is past eighty and may be reading it for the last time. Of course, we hope that each on the list will live to read it many more times, but for each there will come a “last time” (Hebrews 9:27; James 4:14). This aging saint may be reading the Bible for the one hundredth time. Its words are familiar...its cover is worn...its pages creased. It has fed, warmed, guided, encouraged, emboldened, and edified through all the steeps, roughs, mountains, and valleys of life. Yet, the Bread of Life has never grown stale.

TEARS FLOWED. Christian love often finds itself expressed in tears, as it did with Jesus and the early Christians (Luke 19:41; Acts 20:37). God’s Word touched good and honest hearts, and souls responded Sunday to the Lord’s invitation. Joyful tears flowed over “*one sinner that repenteth*” (cf. James 5:16,19,20). That’s what happened Sunday! Insignificant? Hardly! †

Allen Webster preaches for the Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Alabama, USA, and is the Editor of *House to House/Heart to Heart*.

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Absenteeism from Worship

Flavil H. Nichols

Have you strong conscientious convictions about attending worship? God has always demanded that man worship Him. Do you personally regard lightly your own absence from worship? Or, do you classify absenteeism as a serious violation of God's will? Let us approach this, as any other Bible subject, with an open mind and allow God's Word to settle the matter. In all things we should be willing for God's Word to be the LAST word on the subject!

God requires worship! Even in the Old Testament this was true, where various forms of the word "worship" appear 115 times. Most of the 76 times this word occurs in the New Testament it is translated from the Greek "proskuneo". The Greek "pros" means "toward", and "kuneo" means "to kiss" — thus, it is an indication of respect and affection. It first appears in the story of Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:2), where the American Standard translators (by at least a two-thirds vote) put this footnote: "The Greek word denotes as act of reverence whether paid to a creature (Matthew 4:9; 18:26) or to the creator (Matthew 4:10)." God is worthy of man's love and worship and requires it. Not only had God demanded reverence and awe, mingled with fear and affection, but He has regulated our expression of that homage. Notice some of His requirements:

1. **We must worship God and no other.** When tempted by the Devil to fall down and worship him, Jesus said, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve*" (Matthew 4:10).
2. **We must worship God sincerely.** No hypocrisy will be acceptable. To the Samaritan woman Jesus said, "*The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23,24). "*In spirit*" means to put one's spirit or heart into the worship — to be sincere, without pretense.
3. **Our worship must be "in truth"** (John 4:23,24). Each ingredient of our worship must be authorized in the Scriptures. There must be no addition, subtraction, nor substitution for what God authorized in the "truth".
4. **God accepts reverent worship.** "*We must serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire*" (Hebrews 12:28,29). "Reverence" is defined as "profound respect mingled with

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love and awe”. It acknowledges that God has an intrinsic and inviolate claim to man’s respect and honor. *“If any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth”* (John 9:31).

- 5. God specifically forbids absenteeism from the worship.** The saints in the first century came together to break bread upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). God expects the whole church to assemble for worship and even for special teaching services as described in 1 Corinthians 14 (note especially verse 23). He specifically tells Christians not to forsake the assembly: *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another: and so much the more as you see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

Now, I repeat the question with which we began this study: Do you have deep convictions about attending worship? Since God has commanded us to worship, one who fails to do so disobeys God. To disobey is a sin. The apostle John wrote: *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4). James added, *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17).

“God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). If it is no sin for one person to willfully miss the worship, it would not be sin for two — or two hundred — or two thousand! The church assembly can just perish from the earth! *“For there is no respect of persons with God”* (Romans 2:11). What person who claims to follow the New Testament can believe that it would be right for the *“churches of Christ”* (Romans 16:16) to cease to exist as congregations? Yet, when congregations fail to congregate, they are not “congregations” any longer!

If you, as a member of the Lord’s church, have been neglecting to assemble and worship, I believe you have sinned. Do you have this conviction now of your own guilt? If so, I plead with you to repent and be restored (Revelation 2:5). Absenteeism is a public sin; hence repentance of it should be publicly announced, that the congregation may know of your change of heart. *“Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed”* (James 5:16). Only by such public confession will they know (1) to forgive your neglect and dereliction of duty; (2) to pray for and with you that God will forgive you (Acts 8:22-24); (3) to encourage you to keep you from slipping back into the same sin again (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Yes, neglecting worship is a serious sin! *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Hebrews 10:31). †

Flavil H. Nichols has been preaching the Gospel since 1934, and he now lives in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.

WORSHIP



Several years ago on a Sunday morning, I missed the Lord's Supper. I didn't mean to. It was an accident. I was sitting on a pew by myself (a short pew — only room for one). The servers came first with the bread. Everyone around me received — I was skipped. Then came the grape juice. One of the brothers noticed this time. He offered and I refused. "Tonight I'll do them both," I thought. So I missed the Lord's Supper — and I felt empty.

Have you ever missed communion? How did you feel? Filled or empty? Happy or sad? Spiritual or worldly? Were you brought closer to Jesus by having missed? Did it make you love Jesus more?

Let me tell you something that bothers me. On any given Sunday, there are Christians who miss communion, and they never give it a thought. It doesn't bother them. They don't feel empty. Nothing. Zero. The cross has not been seen. Jesus hasn't been remembered. The resurrection has not been glorified, but so what? Fish were caught. Golf was played. The yard was mowed. The garden was planted. The boss was pleased. What else matters?

One day we will meet Jesus face to face. The Jesus who suffered, bled, and died. The Jesus who arose. The Jesus — our Judge. We will wish then that we had met Him more often at the cross. *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"* (John 6:56). †

Keith Parker is a Gospel preacher working with the Hendersonville Church of Christ in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.

WORSHIP

To Whom and Through Whom?

Betty Burton Choate

“... Most assuredly, I say unto you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23,24).

Have you heard prayers like this: “Father, we thank you for your body which you gave for us ...” “... Father, thank you for your blood that was shed for us ...”

Granted, the finite human mind will not be able to fully comprehend the spiritual Godhead, but the revelation of God tells us as much as we have the ability to grasp. The singular form for “God” in Hebrew — EL — is used about 500 times in Scripture, while the plural form with a singular verb — ELOHIM — is used approximately 3,000 times. This, with the following information, leads us to conclude that our one God is three Persons, and frequent references in Scripture identify these three:

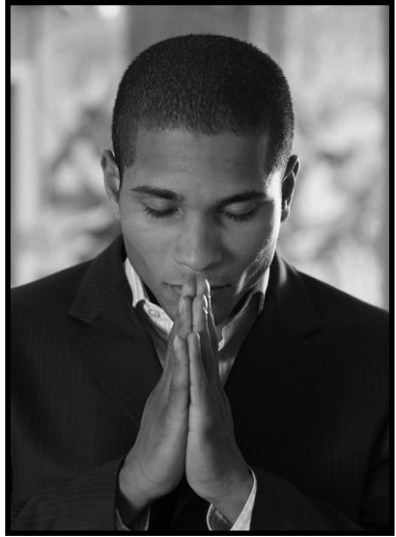
◆ the **Lord of Hosts**, the **Word**, the **Spirit of God** (Genesis 1:1,2; John 1:1,3)

◆ the **Father**, the **Son**, and the **Holy Spirit** (Matthew 28:19)

◆ “**Jesus** ... declared to be the **Son of God** ... according to the **Spirit of holiness** ...” (Romans 1:3,4)

◆ “... the **Spirit Himself** bears witness .. that we are ... heirs of **God** and joint heirs with **Christ** ...” (Romans 8:16,17)

◆ In Isaiah 48:12,13, we read a declaration: “**I am He, I am the First, I am also the last** ...” and going on to verse 16, the same voice continues: “... and now the **Lord God** and **His Spirit** have sent me.”



WORSHIP

We learn from Scripture that the **Godhead** works together, as in the creation. But further definition in the New Testament (Philippians 2:5-8; John 1:14) shows that when the **Word** emptied Himself and took human form, He subjected Himself to the will of the **Father** who had sent Him into the world (Hebrews 5:8; John 7:16). Then we read in John 14:26, “*But the **Helper**, the **Holy Spirit**, Whom the **Father** will send in **My** name, He will teach you all things ...*”

Thus, paying attention to Scriptural explanations, we realize that the **Word**, born into the world as the **Son of God** and the **Son of man** (Hebrews 1:5,6) — our Brother, **Jesus Christ** — has become the bridge connecting us to God. God is **His** Father, Jesus is **our** Brother, therefore God is also **our** Father. Galatians 4:6 says that it is the Spirit of the **Son** within us, crying “Abba, Father” that identifies us as **sons of God** and not slaves.

And what about the Holy Spirit? As we read earlier, the apostles were promised that He would be sent to them and would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them. It was through this special inspiration that the Scriptures were written (2 Timothy 3:16), so, in the written Word, we have the continual guidance provided by the Spirit. We are also told that He is given to all those who obey God (Acts 5:32), that He *strengthens* the inner man (Ephesians 3:16), that He helps us in *our weaknesses*, and that He helps us with *our prayers* when we don’t know how to pray (Romans 8:26).

From these passages we learn several important things. Of course we realize that God is all-powerful, that He knows all things — He even knows our thoughts before they are fully formulated in our own minds (Psalm 139), so He surely *hears* our prayers, Himself. But in His description of His relationship to Christians, **God the Father** is designated as *the One to whom we address our prayers*. **Jesus Christ**, His Son and our Brother, is *the one through whose name and authority we speak to God*; and the **Holy Spirit** *helps us with those agonized prayers* that we cannot articulate alone.

We must respect God’s own distinctions in the work of the Godhead. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that it was the Father’s body that was sacrificed for us; nowhere does it say that the Holy Spirit died for us. So, **to Whom** are we to pray? to *God the Father*. **Through Whom** must we pray? through *Jesus Christ, our Lord*. And **with Whose aid** may we word those prayers? with the aid of the *Holy Spirit*. These are important distinctions to be remembered. †

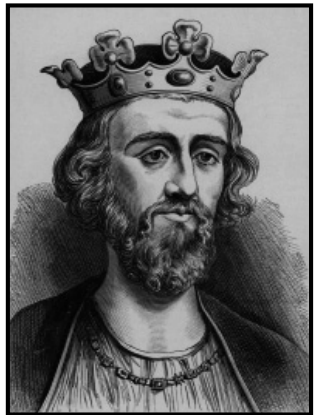
Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, the original editor and publisher of *The Voice of Truth International*.

Who Am I?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. **100** I was a wicked king in the nation of Israel (1 Kings 16:29,30).
2. **90** I married a woman from Phoenicia (1 Kings 16:31).
3. **80** I established worship to the idol Baal with an altar at Samaria (1 Kings 16:31,32).
4. **70** Elijah told me that God would prevent rain in my kingdom for many years (1 Kings 17:1).
5. **60** Elijah confronted my prophets on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18).
6. **50** Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, tried to conquer Samaria while I was king, but God delivered us (1 Kings 20).
7. **40** I wanted someone else's vineyard. My wife got it for me by killing the man (1 Kings 21:1-16).
8. **30** I died in a battle with Syria (1 Kings 22:35-37).
9. **20** I did more evil than the kings before me (1 Kings 16:30).
10. **10** My wife's name was Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

- 1. 100** I am an important inland city of the biblical world.
- 2. 90** I am not near any major trade routes, but my elevated location makes me easy to defend.
- 3. 80** I have been known by many names and occupied by many different people (Genesis 14:18; Joshua 10:1-4; 1 Chronicles 11:4-9).
- 4. 70** I served as a capital city (2 Samuel 5:3-5).
- 5. 60** I became home to a beautiful temple (2 Chronicles 3-4).
- 6. 50** One of my kings changed the course of a natural spring to supply my people with water without leaving the city (2 Chronicles 32:30).
- 7. 40** My people grieved for me and never forgot me when I was destroyed by an enemy (Psalm 137).
- 8. 30** After years of lying in ruin, my people rebuilt my walls and my buildings (read Ezra and Nehemiah).
- 9. 20** A very important man suffered execution outside my walls (Matthew 27:27-37).
- 10. 10** Today, I am the capital of the nation of Israel.



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Reminiscences And Impressions of Ukraine

L.T. Gurganus



Christian Home

For years I can recall hearing prayers in the church that God would open the doors of evangelism in the USSR. Some European missionaries like Otis Gatewood, Bob Hare, and others, not knowing one could not preach in the Soviet controlled part of the world, did anyway. True, one could not go there and live and work as a missionary, but short trips under severe limitations were possible.

Then, God answered the many prayers and the Soviet Union fell apart from internal corruption. The door was open. It was mostly open for people involved in education. Therefore, people from Christian schools and preacher training schools and others began to go, hold campaigns, baptize hundreds, start churches, and then Bible Schools to further teach and train the new Christians. There were unbelievable opportunities to go into universities and openly lecture and even debate with the teachers before the students. Interest was great all over the U.S. to take advantage of these opportunities. However, the new wore off, and many U.S. churches seemed too content just to go and baptize without thorough teaching on how to live as Christians. Of course, many **did** see the need — in fact, the absolute necessity — of well-grounded leaders and members. Therefore, Bible classes were started in many places. This article cannot be a history of these church plantings and schools because most of it was started **before** I got to Ukraine in 1994, and I have never even been in Eastern Ukraine on the Russian border where much of the Bible schools and evangelistic work have been concentrated.

Ukraine is now the size of France and was called the Breadbasket of

FROM THE HEART OF

Europe before the communist takeover. The capitol, Kiev, was the third largest city in the USSR behind Moscow and St Petersburg. Ships came through the Black Sea to Ukraine even before Jesus' time. Ukraine was forced into the USSR in the few years following the 1917 Communist Revolution. It was among the first to declare independence when given the opportunity. It was very difficult economically. People had little, food was scarce, and there were few jobs. Inflation immediately ate up what people had planned to exist on after retirement. Some even starved to death. One can exist on bread and potatoes, and these had been subsidized by the USSR government. I hope to see future articles by Roger Campbell, J.C. Enlow, Demar Elam and others who pioneered works.

My first opportunity came late in 1994 when Dr. Will Goodheer invited me to teach Bible and Western Civilization at the newly established International Christian University in Kiev. My wife Joan was assistant to Joe Stevenson, the English teacher. Before going, I met with Kerry Sword to get information on the work there. He is still there preaching!

At the time, he was working with Roger Campbell, Jim Waldren and perhaps others in the heart of Kiev. We usually called this the Central church. We visited them and also Walter Pigg who preached across the Othe River. Tim Johnson was teaching at the university, and I preached at a nearby suburb. Fred and Sharon Selby were teaching at the university and working with



Central Church

the "school 53" church. For a while, more churches met in rented school buildings and were identified by the number of the school. It was not long before we were forced out of the schools. "School 53" church grew and now has its own building at Obolon.

At that time, a group had had a campaign at Skvira about 75 miles away and got a church started and were looking for a preacher. I was a preacher looking for a place to preach, so I began preaching three Sundays a month. It took several hours to get there by streetcar, train, and bus. So, we left Saturday morning and spent the night in a hotel, preached Sunday morning and spent several hours getting back. The church still meets there and invites me to visit each time I return to Ukraine.

One Sunday monthly I preached at Dneiptozheizhiusk. This required a

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Skvira

Friday night train ride, then a Saturday afternoon Bible class and Sunday visit with one church in the morning and another in the afternoon, then back to Kiev on the night train, barely getting to class at 9:00 a.m. Monday morning.

During this time, there were campaign groups holding evangelistic meetings all over Ukraine and other former USSR countries. Crowds were

easy to assemble. Everything about America was new and unusual, and just the presence of several Americans would attract a crowd to listen. The economic situation was so terrible many foods were not available. An entire store might have food on three shelves. Neither checks, travelers checks or credit cards were usable. It was common to stand in line for 30 minutes in order to get bread and 30-45 minutes in another to get potatoes. Usually people who went as missionaries would have their sponsoring churches send them a “letter” hand carried by one on an evangelistic campaign. Thus, financial support would eventually get to the missionary.

Little inconveniences included almost always **standing** on streetcars, buses, and trains and waiting in the cold when they were an hour late. Inflation was so great that coins became worthless so all public phones were free and about all link calls did not go through. Slowly things began to improve — changing from a government owned and controlled economy to a market economy was slow. It seemed people just couldn’t believe it was true — they were politically free!

There was a surge of hope and enthusiasm. Years of not being able to visit or even get information from the West was replaced with an openness that allowed students who had completed high school (11 years) to spend a year in an American High School. There were many in my Bible classes like this. At I.C.U. we needed no interpreters — all the students spoke English. Some were converted all along and are still faithful.

The Future

Like in all the world, the economic situation has again deteriorated greatly in Ukraine. Consumer goods are now readily available, but expensive for average people — the glory days of “super receptivity” of the Gospel are over. This is all the more reason to work to encourage and train the Ukrainian

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Christians. Just as in Jesus' letters to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2,3) our concern needs to be for scriptural teaching and godly living. We must work with the Ukrainian brothers with one fact clearly in mind — when Ukraine is evangelized, it will be by Ukrainians! We can still help and strengthen and encourage and work together with them to glorify God by carrying out the never changing Great Commission of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). Satan has worked diligently to undo all good. He has used some men to attempt to introduce instrumental music in some churches, and divisions and problems of U.S. churches have been exported to Ukraine. This is all the more reason to preach the **Word** with all diligence. †

L.T. Gurganus lives in Parrish, Alabama, USA and makes frequent mission trips overseas.



The Church in the Ukraine Since 1990

James A. Sherman, Jr.

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11 NKJV).

To God be the glory in all things. The work in the Ukraine has brought

FROM THE HEART OF

glory to God throughout the years since 1990. The power of prayer and providence can be witnessed by the opening up of some of the countries of the former USSR. Christians prayed for years that Christianity could go there, and God opened the door.

Some valuable lessons have been learned since 1990 when the first trip occurred.

1. Do not do for others what they can do for themselves.
2. Do not overwhelm them with what you have by giving them too much and emphasizing their poverty. Many individual hosts (those with whom we stay) received so many things, gifts, and money that the rest of the church became jealous, causing many problems. It is a tradition to bring a little something, like candy or flowers, but not to open your suitcases and overwhelm them with so much so soon.

3. Make them Christians and not Americans.

4. Do not take our problems over there; preach the Word and the Word only. When teaching a passage in the Bible, Americans sometimes make the mistake of telling them about a false doctrine in the USA that surrounds that passage. Christ knew that there was information that the disciples were not ready for. *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come”* (John 16:12,13).

5. When you teach members of the Lord’s church to teach in their own language, the Word spreads a lot faster than when one goes with a translator, one on one.

6. We need to reinforce the Christians that we have converted and not only seek numbers in baptisms. We want quality as well as quantity. Quantity without quality does not accomplish God’s glory, only our own.

The Ukraine is now involved with the C.I.S, “Commonwealth of Independent States”, which is made up of most of the countries from the former U.S.S.R. The Ukraine is not legally a member today (“Commonwealth of Independent States” from *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia).

From the early days of the country’s independence, hundreds, if not thousands, of Christians from the church of Christ poured into the former USSR to take advantage of the opportunity to evangelize. The churches of Christ are still sending many over each year. The denominational world also poured thousands upon thousands of their members into the former USSR and are still doing so today.

FROM THE HEART OF

In 1990, Gene Landis (Gray, TN, now deceased) and I went with Clifford Yeldell (Montgomery, AL) on his third trip, our first. He represented the Hunter Station Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama. They had been involved with a Russian-speaking radio station, broadcasting to the Soviet Union. The result of Clifford's trips has been the establishment of five congregations in the Ukraine, including scores of baptisms.

In 1990, Clifford reported six congregations meeting in Russia as of October 4th. He knew of over 120 Christians. In most places, a contact is responsible for the church's beginning. On our first trip, Ivan Kolesnikow of Canada made our contacts. Clifford had names of his relatives and friends he had baptized in Donetsk, Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, and Slavyansk, Ukraine.

An article in *The World Evangelist*, August, 1990, reported that two elders of the Hunter Station Church of Christ, Beau Greer and Clifford Yeldell, had a successful trip to the Soviet Union in March of 1990. My first trip was in November and December of 1990. We went with the invitation from officials in Moscow, Donetsk, and Slavyansk to teach the Bible. Clifford Yeldell, Gene Landis, and I traveled to and worked in Moscow and Slavyansk together. Gene and I went to Donetsk, Kiev, and Dnepropetrovsk, while Clifford went to Odessa, Mykop, and Belorechensky.

I know how John Mark of Acts 13:13 felt when he returned home — the one who caused Paul and Barnabas to split into two missionary teams because of the feelings over his departure (Acts 15:38). When we landed in Moscow for my first time, if I could have gotten a return ticket home, I would have. I learned the necessity of continuing to reassure those going on mission trips for the first time. Apparently John Mark got over whatever caused him to go home, evidenced by Paul's request in 2 Timothy 4:11.



My family and the congregation in Shady Valley, Tennessee decided I could not be gone more than two Sundays, unless approved by the elders. However, they allowed me to split the four Sundays for mission work into two different mission trips using only two Sundays and on approved trips three Sundays. I did not take a trip in 1991. While on my 1990 trip, December 3rd

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through the 25th, I was told telegrams were being sent back home informing my family where I was. When I arrived in Chicago and called home, I found out they had not heard from me from the day I left and were thinking they would never see me again. My wife, Doris, would not leave my side for weeks.



Gene Clemons (Sink Grove, WV), a brother who motivated many to go to the mission fields, including the Ukraine, estimated in 1992 that seven of us from the States spoke to over 7,000 people about Jesus. Gene figured that I personally spoke to between 2,000 and 3,000. We taught at the Translation Institute and a Management Institute (owned by Mr. Poddubni), which today do not exist. On an outing with one of the classes, I stood in the middle of a Greek Orthodox Church and taught them about God and worship; showing that we are not to worship objects or men. We studied with a young man for over an hour under the statue of Lenin. In the evening, we taught in a dorm until late at night. A brother, R.C. Poke, had established a Bible School and was housing students in a dormitory next door. R.C. had a heart attack and returned to the States within a year. Jerry Newberry took over the school for about a year and then returned to the United States. We invited and taught students from the institutes in the evenings at the Bible school. During this trip, whenever we had free time at the dorm, a student would ask a question and we would be off into another Bible study.

Almost every Sunday we spoke at some congregation of the Lord. During the week we taught in all kinds of schools, public and private, and would have Bible studies in the evenings. In the evenings we studied “Why God Made Man”, now entitled “God’s Eternal Purpose”, and currently taught in the Bear Valley Bible School of the Ukraine each fall as the “Scheme of Redemption”.

At one point in a personal study, a young man, Armon Bagdasarian from Armenia, got so excited about the Bible that he began



FROM THE HEART OF

to speak Armenian. His brother, Albert, had to remind him to speak Russian so our translator could translate into English. Albert has become an important factor in the growth of the church throughout East Ukraine.

In April of 1995, my wife, Ken Dorman (Marysville, Missouri), and I went to Slavyansk and Kramatorsk. At Kiev, going through passport check, Doris was pushed around by a soldier with an AK47 before she was allowed to follow me through the checkpoint. She had some kind of flu for a few days in Slavyansk, and in Kramatorsk she was interrogated by a policeman for over thirty minutes. Needless to say, it has taken her some time to get over that trip.

Things have changed in the Ukraine from then to now — from telegrams the first year, to the knowledge of how to go to the telephone company to pay and make long-distance calls, to those who had long-distance connected to their home phone, to email, cell phones and to internet contacts that can be called for little or nothing to the USA, to dialing as if you are in the States with



the phone call as clear as if you were in the room with them. Entry into the Ukraine is easier with a lot less paper work, no visa, insurance and declarations of amount of money, etc. Also, we no longer have to register. The money has gone from coupons to Hryvnia, the living conditions from poverty to prosperity.

Ukrainians can buy Russian and Ukrainian Bibles from Europe cheaper than we can have them printed in the U.S.A. and shipped to them. There are those who are raising money to print Bibles here in the States when the same money spent in the Ukraine would provide many more Bibles.

From 1995 to 1997, I traveled to other cities as well as Slavyansk and Kramatorsk. We followed up on World English School students who had taken, or were taking, their correspondence course.

In the fall of 1997, a Bible Department had been established by Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, under J.J. Turner, at Kramatorsk Institute of Language and Management. Buck Hall (now deceased) was the director of the Bible chair until his retirement in 2003, and Terry Harman assumed the responsibilities. In 2007, the Bible chair moved to Gorlovka outside of Kramatorsk and became a full time preacher's school, now named, "Bear

FROM THE HEART OF

Valley Bible School of the Ukraine”. Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree programs were developed while in Kramatorsk. Ukrainian students who have obtained the Master’s degree are now teaching most of the Bachelor’s classes, with an occasional teacher from the States, like me. Terry Harman is now sharing co-directorship with Albert Bagdasarian.



Almost every trip now, I hear of a new congregation being started, and old ones being reinforced by students. I have always felt that the best way to spread the Gospel in any nation is to use Bible-grounded nationals who speak the language and know the customs of the people. Foreign missionaries do a lot of good and are needed, especially in the foundational years. They can be a drawing card to bring people in to listen, but local men can do many things foreigners can’t do.

Over the last few years, I have worked increasingly with congregations to edify and build up the members in special evening meetings. I teach that the “Gospel” is the “Good News”. I also give lessons on family living according to the Bible, showing that the letters of the New Testament are addressed to the church so that we may conduct ourselves righteously and answer in a godly way. There is the need, too, for explaining how we can know we are saved (1 John 5:13) and yet how the saved can fall from grace (Colossians 1:23). So far these classes have been taught in Kramatorsk, Izyum, Konstantinovika, Krosnorminsk, and in the Prolitarsky congregation in Donetsk.



The supporters through the years for the work in the Ukraine have been many and the list would be too long for me to begin it here. It is to God we give the glory, anyway, and not to man. Everyone who has done work or been supportive of the work in the Ukraine can feel proud that the prayers that the Gospel be preached in the former Soviet Union have been answered. To God be the glory. †

James Sherman preaches for the Shady Valley Church of Christ in Shady Valley, Tennessee, USA and makes annual mission trips to the Ukraine.

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

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

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God’s Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of The Voice of Truth International is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with \$35 a month, to cover the \$8,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

To help with this particular need, please send your checks to:

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
call us at 662-283-1192 or send your E-Mail to

Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

Website: WorldEvangelism.org

Dear Brethren:

- I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, The Voice of Truth International. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. My address is given below.
- I want to order the complete set of volumes in print (60 issues) for the reduced price of \$2.00 per copy. My address is given below.
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- I want to MAKE A GIFT subscription of The Voice of Truth International. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. The address is given below.
- I want to send \$25.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed. Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way. Or you may send one payment of \$300.00 per year for four issues. This will help us to send more copies to the mission fields.
- We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.
- As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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

Attn: Byron Nichols

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

Box 11218

Springfield, MO 65808

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from Page 24)

1. Christians can continue to live in sin.
2. Certainly not!
3. Died to sin.
4. We should no longer live in sin.
5. Baptized into Christ and into His death.
6. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
7. Immersion. Only an immersion suits the imagery of a burial.
8. Newness of life.
9. Crucified.
10. Free.
11. Death.
12. His New life will never end in death. His life is outside the realm of death.
13. Once.
14. God.
15. Dead, alive.
16. In Christ.

Who Am I? (page 98)

King Ahaz

Where Am I? (page 99)

Jerusalem

Bible Find (from Page 74)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Ukraine



Government of Ukraine: Republic

Head of State:

Prime Minister Yuliya TYMOSHENKO

Secular Facts:

Location: East Europe, bordered by Belarus, Russia, Moldova, and Romania.

Land Mass: 233,090 sq. mi., slightly smaller than Texas.

Capital: Kiev; other major cities: Kharkov and Dnepropetrovsk.

Population: 45,700,395; growth rate, -0.632%; (9.6 births/1,000 population; 15.81 deaths/1,000 population).

Language: Ukrainian (official) 67%, Russian 24%, other 9%.

Education: 99.4% literacy.

Religion: Ukrainian Orthodox - Kyiv Patriarchate 50.4%, Ukrainian Orthodox - Moscow Patriarchate 26.1%, Ukrainian Greek Catholic 8% . . .

Ethnic Groups: Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%; small percentages for others.

Economy: Unemployment rate: 3%;

Percent below poverty line: 37.7%.

Life expectancy: Male: 62.37; female: 74.5; HIV/AIDS, 21st in the world.

Communications: 20th in the world in telephones; radio, TV, internet.

Transportation: 18th in the world in number of airports; 14th in railways; 31st in roadways; 43rd in waterways.

Monetary Units: hryvnia

The Church:

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December of 1991, Ukraine gained independence. The door was at last opened for Christians to enter the country with the message of the Gospel.

In these intervening years, much short-term work has been done, with American preachers going into cities and founding congregations of the Lord's church. Many of these men have returned to the same places year after year to continue to build on earlier efforts. A maturing church in the larger cities is the result.

Home studies with individuals, meetings, and seminars have been used extensively. "World English School" has also been an effective tool for reaching people with the Gospel, through the teaching of English and then the follow-up studies.

In more recent times, Bible training schools have been established, with classes taught by local Christians as well as by missionaries. New congregations are also being begun through the work of Ukrainians.

Front Cover: Ukrainian young man with his Bible. Photo: Jim Sherman