

VOLUME SIXTY-FOUR

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



FROM THE HEART OF . . .
JAIL MINISTRY, PAGE 100

A Christian Soldier

Charles Adams

A soldier's marching forth today,
A Christian's marching down the way.
He has a book within his hand;
He's moving on to take his stand.
His sword is but the Word of God
It is his strength and guiding rod.
His greatest vict'ry is a soul
Although the whole world is his goal.
And in the silent realms of prayer
Are all his thoughts invested there.

His battle field is every door,
Even as the tempests roar;
And while the day is growing dim
He's gathering precious souls for Him.

He rests in God throughout the night,
New strength to garner for the fight,
The fight of Faith, of Hope, of Love,
To gather medals up above
Where the Master ever rules
Over His unworthy tools.
He wears no uniform or stars,
No golden stripes or service bars.
His obstacles are hate and strife;
His serving time is all his life.
Glory bright is only his;
He a Christian Soldier is.



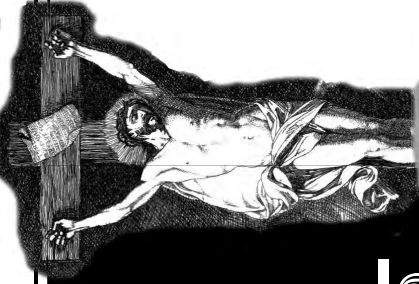
At What Point Does Salvation Occur?

The soul is lost in sin:

“... **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...”**
(Romans 3:23)

“... **with the heart one believes unto**
righteousness ...” (Romans 10:10)

“... **with the mouth confession is made unto**
salvation ...” (Romans 10:10)



“... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

“... Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3,4).



“... you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. *For* as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26,27).

What Is the Kingdom into Which People Are Born?



“... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

“... on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...” (Matthew 16:18,19).

“... by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

“... And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.” (Ephesians 1:22,23).

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

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

THE kingdom
is

THE church
which is

His ONE body
over which
He is

THE ONE Head.

THE church
is the FAMILY,
the BRIDE of
Christ

who wears
HIS NAME.

Is the church of which you are a member called by the name of Christ?

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



There's a Killer Among Us!

Byron Nichols

“Killer bees” and some wild animals known to be “killers” — such creatures can create fear in humans, sometimes even hysteria.

Of significantly more importance is the fact that even the church is susceptible to foes that can inflict catastrophic, sometimes even fatal, damage to the magnificent body of Christ. One of the church's most fearsome predators is that killer known as “Apathy”.

It's my sincere belief that apathy has killed more good efforts of all kinds than the outright opposition of strong physical enemies. In addition, it is highly likely that apathy has been at least as detrimental to success in the realm of religion as in any other.

Apathy translates into — “I just really don't care,” whether we are talking about a cause, a person, or a concept. Included in the immense damage that apathy inflicts to the cause of Christ is its smothering effect on many of our attempts to evangelize the lost.

What Can Cause Apathy Toward Evangelism?

(1) ***Desire for acceptance and popularity.*** Even in the church this desire can cause us to sacrifice what is *best* for what is *wanted*. This desire may cause us to be *overly* cautious about offending others with the Gospel.

(2) ***Tolerance and broadmindedness.*** The idea seems to be that “*we* have *our* faults,” and “*they* have *their* faults,” so *we* have no business trying to show to *them* that what *they* are practicing religiously is different from what the Bible teaches. To be “broadminded” has become a most treasured attribute, and to “tolerate” any and every doctrine and practice is viewed as being truly spiritual, when in reality it easily becomes just the opposite. As a result, too many in the church are willing to let evangelization of the world go lacking.

(3) *A growing spirit of universalism.* As unfortunate as it is, there are some, even in leadership roles, who are no longer sure that the **lost are really lost**. Much of what has been black and white from the first century has now become gray. The emphasis becomes, “We are all God’s children.”

(4) *Attitude toward the distinctiveness of the church.* If we fail to see the difference between Christ’s church and those of man’s creation, there is no point in evangelizing the world with the message of salvation, because that message inherently tells of the one church that Jesus built, the one to which those who are being saved are added.

(5) *Lack of commitment and conviction.* To a large extent, the Lord’s church is not displaying a commitment equivalent to that of some of Christianity’s greatest foes, resulting in an evangelistic effort which is definitely inferior. Effective evangelism occurs only when there is a strong belief in the evangel, the Gospel message. Paul declared with conviction, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek*” (Romans 1:16). He further voiced his commitment in 1 Corinthians 9:16, “*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*”

Apathy in evangelism can be conquered if we can come to understand what Christianity is really all about. We must see that we are not our own, but that we truly “*have been bought with a price*” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). We must move from *selfishness* to *sympathy*, sympathy for those who are still lost in sin. It isn’t hard at all to get people to give a great deal of themselves in rescue efforts to find a lost child, and that is indeed as it should be. Now, just imagine what would result if we, the church of Christ, would emulate that same passion and urgency in an effort to rescue the lost souls of the world!

In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul reveals at least part of his motivation for evangelism. He was impressed with the coming judgment: “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” (verse 10), and this of course applied to both him and his hearers. However, he also testified that his evangelism resulted because he was so affected by the love of Christ. Paul adamantly declared what is the only acceptable response to the love of Christ by those who claim to be His – “*and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again*” (verse 15, emphasis added).

A deep love for someone will cause us to do exceptional things for the benefit of that one whom we love, and those who truly love the Lord will not have to struggle in determining how much to do for Him and His cause. The killer **Apathy** will itself have been killed by **Love**. †



Everyone who knows much about the Bible is familiar with the account of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Likely, we sympathize with the Israelites as they cower with fear as Pharaoh's powerful army draws closer to return them to bondage. We read of the courage of Moses as he boldly announces to his followers, "*Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today*" (Exodus 14:13). We marvel at the miraculous dividing of the waters that allowed the Israelites to cross over on dry land. However, there is

Red Sea Marching Orders

Jerry Bates

one part of the episode that we often overlook. In verse 15 God says, "*Why do you cry to me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.*" It was not the time for them to cower in fear, or to wait for God to do everything, but to go forward in faith. God would fight for them and save them, but only if they went forward in obedience. They did go forward as God instructed and they escaped into safety under His care.

We are not under God's miraculous care as they were, but still He has promised to take care of us (Matthew 6:33). In spite of that promise, many of us still want to rely on our own wisdom and strength. Especially when financial or other hardships come our way, we tend to become pessimistic and pull back. After all, we don't know what next month or next year will bring. Rather than relying upon God and entrusting the future to His care, we try to look into the future and make decisions accordingly. We become like the

children of Israel, and we stand still and wait to see what happens. However, God's work does not stop, and certainly Satan doesn't quit. While we wait to see what will happen, people continue to die, lost! I wonder if God might say to us, "Go forward." Now is not the time to stand still or cower in fear of the future, but to go forward in God's work. He will take care of us only if we continue to go forward in faith.

Moreover, several verses use the imagery of "walking" in our Christian life. Of course, the term "walk" refers to the manner of life that the Christian should live. We often say that it simply means that we should avoid the evil of the world and live righteously. That is true, but the term "walk" also implies going forward towards a goal. For example, Paul writes in Colossians 1:10, "*that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*" Paul says that we must walk "worthy" of the Lord, that is, in a manner suitable of a follower of God. Then he specifies how we walk worthily, by being fruitful and growing spiritually either in or by the knowledge of God. Both terms imply doing something and walking towards a goal. Notice another passage. "*Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should **abound more and more**, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God*" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Paul reminded the Thessalonians how they had been taught to live or walk, and he urged them to continually grow in that walk. Thus, again we see an emphasis of going towards a goal. We cannot be growing while standing still, and we cannot be walking as God requires, while waiting to see what is going to happen. Let us continue to "go forward". Yes, we do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. Moreover, God has promised to give us grace to handle whatever problems tomorrow may bring. We have enough trouble for today, without being overly concerned about some imagined catastrophe of tomorrow. Therefore, rather than worrying about how bad the future might be, let us continue to do what we can for God for as long as we can, trusting in Him to care for us. †

***“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”
(Matthew 6:34)***

Dilapidated Barns

Louis Rushmore

The State of Ohio recognizes centennial barns throughout its counties; perhaps some other states do something similar. A barn must be in good repair and be at least 100-years-old; some barns are 200-years-old. Selected barns, meeting this criteria, are painted white and wear their state citation from ground to roof on the side most visible to traffic. These barns are considered part of the American heritage and are an ever present, nostalgic reminder of our nation's cherished yesterday. Each of those barns and many others reside in a picturesque rural community, surrounded by other farm buildings, like silos, corncribs and tractor sheds; many are accented with country homes, and often fields encircle all the buildings.



However, many barns throughout Ohio and other states are in some state of disrepair. It borders on sadness to observe a once grand structure such as an antique barn with roof gone and its skeleton of beams exposed to the harsh elements, or worse to see that the whole, collapsed, massive edifice has finally fallen victim to gravity and collided with the earth. Why did no one paint the weatherworn planks on their walls? Why were gnarled boards and sagging timbers not replaced? Just why are some barns preserved and heralded while others are surrendered to neglect and rot? Maybe the answer lies, in part, with whether the farms on which the barns sit are still working farms. In any case, broken-down barns are cheerless silhouettes on yesterday's horizon.

Dilapidated barns make me think of dilapidated family units, which make up dilapidated national mores. I suppose this is so because once our nation depended more heavily on family farms where these barns were vital

parts of the family farm business, where like the Walton Family popular on television decades ago, three or four generations of family members lived and worked together. These strong family units made our nation strong, not the least of which, strong morally.

Today, our families are falling apart from every perspective, and consequently our nation is falling apart from several different perspectives as well. There was a time when the Bible was a principal resource for rearing families, which in turn reared a nation that favored itself with reverence for God.



“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

“Chasten your son while there is hope...” (Proverbs 19:18). “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). “Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13-14). “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15).

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). “...from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:7-11).

Every time I see a barn in disrepair, I think of families in disrepair, and I think of my nation in disrepair. Though some barns are beyond repair, many could be repaired and preserved; and likewise, though some families may appear to be beyond repair — ruined — many families could be repaired and preserved, not with planks and paint, but by the application of God’s Word.

Wisdom from above is worth more than all earthly wisdom combined, and it can repair and preserve families and nations. *“The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17).* For me, there is an obvious correlation between dilapidated barns and dilapidated families, families that make a nation what it is, for better or for worse. †

Dilapidated barns make me think of dilapidated family units, which make up dilapidated national mores.

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God Can, But Should He?

David Deffenbaugh

We marvel at the scene of the tomb of Lazarus. Rightly so. How often is divine power on such spectacular display? The impact of Jesus raising dead Lazarus is evidenced by the thinking of Jewish leaders to kill Lazarus. His being alive was bringing so many people to faith in Jesus that these men felt threatened (John 12:11,12).

Perhaps lost in all the excitement of the dead coming to life (and that is pretty exciting) is an insight into the flawed thought processes of man, flaws to which we are all subject. Many of the people present in Bethany on the occasion of Jesus' arrival after Lazarus had died were saying, "*Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?*" (John 11:37). They had reference to the healing of the man born blind (John 9). Their reasoning was correct in that one who could heal the



blind, as Jesus did, would also have the power to heal the sick who might otherwise die because of his malady. Their question, though, carried with it a sense of expectation. They saw the death of Lazarus as a very sad and troubling event that Jesus, given His divine power, could have prevented, and to their thinking, should have prevented.

GOD

The truth is that just because we know what Jesus (and God) can do, does not also mean that we know what He should do. We can see lots of bad things in our world: evil, pain, suffering, unrighteousness, injustice, etc. We also know of what God is capable. He can create something (actually everything) out of nothing. He knows the future every bit as well as the past. He can heal sickness, resurrect the dead, stop storms, punish the wicked, remove evil people, etc. In short, He



can solve every problem, judge every evil, answer every wrong, remove every obstacle, and restore every loss. What is more, not only do we know He can, we think He should.

Truthfully, most of men's com-

plaints against God are because He does not do what we think He should do, the way we think He should do it, and when we think it should be done. Hmmmmmm.

The greatness of God is not limited to the fact that He can do infinitely more than we can do (as He has sufficiently demonstrated many times). His greatness extends even to His wisdom, His judgment, and His motivation. *“Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways”* (Romans 11:33)!

Before we are too quick to criticize God for His actions or perceived failure to act (remember when we've said, “Well, why doesn't God just...?” or “Why didn't God...?”), we would do well to remember that not only is His power infinitely greater than mine, but so is His wisdom.

I cannot do what He can do, and neither can I know what He should or should not do. †

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

The truth is that just because we know what Jesus (and God) can do, does not also mean that we know what He should do.

Christ, the Trailblazer of Courage

Mike King

The life of Christ was a magnificent demonstration of quality behavior in the face of conflict and confusion. While traveling with His disciples, Jesus taught lessons all along the way that were in intensive preparation for His impending death on the cross in Jerusalem. The Master took His apostles aside and declared for the third time that He would be delivered up, mocked, and killed, but that He would rise again on the third day (Mark 10:33,34). His final visit to Jerusalem epitomized our Lord's courage! Mark records the approach of Jesus and His apostles to Jerusalem, which proved to be the city of doom for Him. He explained, "*And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them*" (Mark 10:32). It is quite natural to choose an easier road or to avoid painful situations, but Jesus "*went before*" His apostles. He was unswerving in His purpose and allegiance, and walked fearlessly in the path of truth and right in spite of the fact that it would lead Him to Calvary and His ultimate death on the cross.

Jesus did not come into the world to make life easy; He came to make men great! This was the primary lesson that His disciples gleaned from their Master. Sin's tactics insist on avoidance, selection of an easy way, and to run from sacrifice. Regardless of the cost, the disciples' Mentor pressed toward right, however great the hurt. His spirit should be a challenge to all who would desire to live unselfishly and victoriously.

Christianity often fails in its appeal to others because of present-day followers refusing to pay the price. Charles Fiske expressed powerfully,

We take our religion so easily; we allow it to evaporate into a dead, dull respectability; we are so unready to put ourselves to any serious inconvenience for the things in which we are supposed to have faith; we are slaves to our surroundings, swept along in the current. Even when we attempt to stand against what we know to be wrong, our effort is poor and paltry, a mere apology for courage; we insinuate a feeble effort which is quickly swept aside, and we then slip back, hardly leaving a dent on any man's conscience, so weak have been our blows.

The heroic Christ on the cross draws us to Him. Jesus gained the attention and respect of the penitent thief on the cross who once flaunted himself as

GOD

a robber working the Jerusalem Road, making gain from unsuspecting and innocent people. The thief is now inspired by the Lord's moral respect and courage, finding strength for facing his own death.

The courage of Jesus was necessitated when He, jealous for righteousness' sake, cleansed the temple. Other trips to the reservoir of courage were made when going before the Scribes and Pharisees, denouncing their hypocrisy. When He stood before Pilate and the Sanhedrin answering the charge of blasphemy, His courage was extremely taxed. Little time had to be spent with the Master, observing His control and restraint under adverse circumstances, especially His death, until one would be moved to declare, just like the Roman soldier and the crucified thief, "*Truly this was the Son of God*" (Matthew 27:54).

Those disciples who accompanied Him on that last pilgrimage to death's dwelling soon possessed fearlessness, self-forgetfulness, and a bravery that sprang from internal wells of utter lack of self-consciousness and conviction. That very courage, branded in the heart of Jesus, became the badge of honor worn by His mentored disciples to their own persecution and martyrdom. His devoted disciples made a tremendous transition from timidity to tenaciousness because they had a message and a mission to a lost world. They felt without a doubt what Paul expressed, "*Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel*" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Proclaim they did, with the intensity of enthusiasm as they were driven by their quest to reach regions unknown. The Lord's disciples unequivocally believed that Christ crucified was the key element to the world's highest well-being. Despite treading in harm's way and enduring jeopardy to their lives, they dared to preach their convictions, though perceived by some to be foolishness or a stumbling block. Their courage enabled them to look beyond present distress and stand undaunted by persecution, imprisonment, and awaiting death, if only they could preach the Gospel that had power to change the world. Jesus blazed the trail with courage to die for a lost world; His disciples continued to pursue that trail with the same courageousness to its end to reach the same objective. Here we are two thousand years later, basking in the fruits of their courage by obtaining that salvation. Now, what role are we pursuing to exhibit similar commitment as a means of the expression of our gratitude and as a continuance of courageous proclamation of the message and mission? The future generations are looking to us for their deliverance from the bondage of sin and for the privilege of exercising their own courageous service. †

Mike King is the pulpit minister of the Lakeside Church of Christ in Orange Park, Florida, USA.

“*Dwelling Amidst the People*”

Rex Banks

Casting a prophetic glance at the future of his three sons, the aged father Noah pronounced the following blessing upon his son Shem: “*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem*” (Genesis 9:26-27). For centuries students of the Scriptures have debated the question:

“Just who is it that is to dwell in the tents of Shem? Is it Japheth or is it God Himself?” Many able students of the Word take the position that it is Japheth who will “*dwell in the tents of Shem,*” and find here a reference to conquest or shared blessing. However, equally able commentators believe that Noah speaks of Jehovah Himself dwelling with Shem, and this suggestion certainly has merit. After

all, Abraham, the father of God’s chosen people, was a descendant of Shem (Genesis 11:10-26), and it was the descendants of Shem whom God called “*My own possession...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (Exodus 19:5,6). Israel, God’s special possession, is a kingdom of priests, and “...the dwelling of God in the tents of Shem becomes the reign of God as



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the king of the kingdom of Israel” (C. A. Briggs). It is to the descendants of Shem that God makes the promise, “*And I will dwell (“tabernacle”) among the sons of Israel and will be their God*” (Exodus 29:45). Later, after the completion of the tabernacle in the wilderness, we read, “*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*” (Exodus 40:34). Israel had to come to appreciate the closeness and active presence of her holy God.

Israel also needed to appreciate that a holy God can only dwell in the midst of a holy people. Because God dwelt in a very special way with the descendants of Shem, the nation was told, “*You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy*” (Leviticus 19:2). It was because the nation was “*...a holy people to the Lord (their)... God*” (Deuteronomy 7:6) that she was to make no covenant with, or show favor to, the idolatrous Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). It was because God tabernacled in the midst of the nation that adultery, homosexuality, and sexual perversion were not to be tolerated in the land (Leviticus 18:20-23). Again and again in the Mosaic Law we read of the death penalty for different offences, followed by the formula: “*So you shall purge the evil from Israel*” (Deuteronomy 13:5,9; 17:5,7; 22:21). Why? Because God’s holy presence tabernacled with Israel! In

fact, after the golden calf incident, the Lord says to Moses: “*I will not go up in your midst (into Canaan) because you are an obstinate people; lest I destroy you on the way*” (Exodus 33:3). They were unfit for God’s near presence and in danger from His righteous anger. It was a serious business living in the presence of a holy God!

Brethren, let’s not forget just how serious! You see, the church is God’s temple, His dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16), and we are His “*special possession*.” Like Israel of old, we are to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). In a world which approves homosexuality, divorce for “burnt toast”, and “open” marriages, we must gently, yet firmly, remind the brethren that they are forbidden “*to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral man...*” (1 Corinthians 5:11). In fact, they are “*...not even to eat with such a one*”! In a world where “business is business”, we must remember that a “weightier provision” of God’s holy law is “justice” (Matthew 23:23). Respect for the aged, fair play between employer and employee, honor for parents, respect between husbands and wives, truthfulness, honesty, integrity, and sincerity — all these things are to characterize a people in whose midst dwells a HOLY GOD. †

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GOD

Hugo McCord

The clearest of all reasons for the existence of Deity is the fact that every effect must have a cause, which logically leads back to an uncaused cause. Normally this reasoning is called the cosmological argument, but its content demands that it be called the argument from cause.

Plato cited three reasons for belief in “the gods”, but the one listed “in the first place” was the very existence of “the earth and the sun and the stars and the universe”. The gods, said he, “produced the sun, moon, and stars”. Joseph Addison (1672-1719) adapted Psalm 19 and could hear all the celestial bodies “utter a glorious voice. Forever singing as they shine. The hand that made us is divine”.

America’s astronauts packaged rocks picked up on the moon’s surface. Reason says that matter without a cause did not just happen. Of nothing, nothing comes.

However, no matter how convincing is the ancient maxim, which leads either to a creation or to nothing as the beginning, some learned men prefer postulating nothing. Professor Fred Hoyle, physicist, Fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge, frankly asserted the origin of the universe’s mother (hydrogen gas) to be out of nothing, calling it eternal emergentism. Another learned man, Schopenhauer (1788-1860) spoke of “blind Will” as perpetually creating the universe, and Henri Bergson (1859-



1941) spoke of creative evolution by “unconscious intelligence”. The last phrase is as contradictory as “conscious mindlessness”, and its use shows to what extent men will go who refuse to have God in their minds.

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To other people, however, the solidity of the lunar rocks on which the Eagle landed in the Sea of Tranquility means reality, and reality demands a cause. If the moon consists of real matter, such as might be on a solid landing place, and such as might be carried back to earth, a maker of lunar matter must be assumed. The evidence obtained by the astronauts does not testify as to how or why the moon maker came into existence. Yet, unless one assumes an infinity of makers, one must say that somewhere along the line there was a maker who was not made. Reason therefore calls for an unmade maker.

However, if the maker was unmade, he must have always been, which renders him eternal. Further, if he did not receive his ability to be a maker, he must be independent, self-contained. It appears then that the very existence of the moon certifies an independent, eternal maker.

Many people have compared such an object as the moon as being part of nature's house and they reason that, as every house is built by somebody, so He who built all things is God. This illustration is so clear and obvious that there is no wonder that David Hume did his best to take the strength from it. Even after the strongest effort by a fault-finder, it is clear that, whether a house is a little manmade one, or a gigantic house of

nature, it had a builder. One does not have to see the builder to know he has been there, for his workmanship has made his presence known. The creation of the world, nature's house, is understood by "*the things that are made*", leaving unbelievers defenseless and without excuse.

Not only does the existence of the moon point to a necessary maker, but its movement in space indicates a necessary mover. Unless one postulates an infinite series of movers, then there was a mover that did not require help to start motion. The mover was self-contained in its power to move things. Furthermore, unless it initiated out of nothing, its power to start motion, then, is an eternal mover. Logic does not assert how many such self-contained eternal movers there are, but it does point to at least one. The apparent unity of the universe indicates that there was only one. "The world refuses to be governed badly; 'ill is the rule of many; one ruler let there be'."

The conclusion apparently is that the existence of the moon points to a maker; the movement of the moon points to a mover; and logic says that the maker-mover must be independent and eternal. †

Hugo McCord (1911 – 2004) was a long-time professor of Bible at Oklahoma Christian University in Edmond, Oklahoma, USA.

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The Bible and Evolution

Howard Winters

Believing as we do that the theory of evolution is contrary to the revealed will of God, we could not “*keep that which is committed to our trust*” without speaking out against the danger of this science, falsely so called.

In some circles men have talked about evolution so long that they have come to accept it as a fact. However, it is not a fact; it is not even a scientific theory: it is a hypothesis. Definition of the three terms: (1) Hypothesis: A tentative solution or proposal concerning a problem, a supposition, a guessed theory — a theory to work on, but one untested by the findings of research. (2) Theory: A formulated (or tested) hypothesis, a probable explanation of a problem. (3) Fact: A theory that has been tested by research and continues to work. No scientific fact is ever final. The hypothesis of evolution has become a theory only by seniority and not by the accumulation of evidence. It is in this sense we refer to it as a theory.

It is not my purpose here to either prove the Bible or disprove evolution. I simply wish to set forth the underlying philosophy of each. When this is done, surely all will be able to see that there is simply no way to harmonize the theory of evolution with plain Bible teaching. The theistic evolutionists have tried this, but they have miserably failed. They always wind up denying the Bible as the infallible, inherent, immutable Word of God. We thus note a few of the many irreconcilable differences.

I. GOD

- A. The Bible pre-supposes God (Genesis 1:1). He is the all-pervading power back of everything. “There is no power but of God.”
- B. Evolution pre-supposes naturalism. There is no power of God. Everything is explained in terms of natural processes. This leaves no place for God.
- C. These two philosophies are as different as night and day — as different as creation and chance development.
- D. Thus, to start with God is to discard evolution; to start with evolution is to abandon God. There is no way to harmonize the two.

II. CREATION

- A. The Bible reveals and teaches the creation of both matter and life by an Almighty Power (Genesis 1 and 2).

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- B. Evolution teaches that matter and life are here as the results of a vast accident, caused by no outside force or power.
- C. In the Bible, all things are made by God and for God (Colossians 1:16,17; Revelation 4:11). Man is only a steward. In evolution, man is an accident, not accountable to any power above himself.
- D. There is simply no way to harmonize these two vastly different philosophies — to believe one is to disbelieve the other.

III. MAN

- A. The Bible presents man as an eternal being, created by God in the image of God (Genesis 1:26,27). Only the Bible answers the three most pressing questions pertaining to man:
 - 1. Where did he come from? From God (Genesis 2:7; 2:18-24).
 - 2. Why is he here? To serve God (Revelation 4:11).
 - 3. Where is he going? Back to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7).
- B. Evolution sees man as nothing more than a child of chance, the offspring of lower forms of life. It has no sensible answer to the questions:
 - 1. Where did he come from? Nowhere. Non-life produced life, life produced non-life, non-entity produced entity.
 - 2. Why is he here? He has no purpose of being.
 - 3. Where is he going? Nowhere but back to non-entity.
- C. There is no harmony between man as made in the image of God and man as a freak of nature — a monkey who has lost his tail but found no soul.

IV. RESULTS

- A. The Bible is ennobling, inspiring, motivational — it builds character, instills righteousness, inspires hope (Psalm 84:11).
- B. Evolution never contributed anything good to anyone — it is an intellectually sophisticated effort to free man from the restraints of higher authority, a mental pacifier for those who wish to remove God from creation.
- C. The pages of history are replete with the lives of men and women who have been changed by the Bible. But whoever heard a man say, “I was a drunk, abused my wife, neglected my children, refused to pay my debts, etc., until one day I heard how man had evolved from a lower form of life, how that he is free from all responsibility, and that made a new man of me — it dried up my drinking, made me love my wife, care for my children, and pay my debts”?

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CONCLUSION

The Bible is (or contains) the faith of Christians. They trust their souls to its truthfulness. Evolution is the faith of unbelievers. They are betting their souls that they do not have souls. †

Howard Winters preached for many years in the states of North and South Carolina, USA.

Is There Ample Proof God Exists?

Tim Childs

Topics that form the foundation of our faith relate to our conviction that God exists, that He has worked supernaturally in the past to bring us and our universe into its present form of orderliness, and that He continues to sustain us and our universe “*by the word of his power*” (Hebrews 1:3). Unbelievers and haters of God notwithstanding, our faith in God is well-founded and reasonable as we survey the evidence God has placed all around us. God has not left himself without witness (cf. Psalm 19:1).

There is the witness of God found in nature itself. There are laws that are associated with nature, and sometimes serious consequences are realized when they are violated. Where there are laws, such as with the case of nature, there must naturally be a lawgiver. In no area of our lives will we ever be met with a law that had no one either to give or impose it. The very nature of law implies there was deliberation made prior to its imposition.

At Lystra, Paul made this appeal to his audience: “*Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*” (Acts 14:15-17). It would be easier to prove before 12 unbiased jurors that God exists, than it would be to prove the opposite. Try as they might, no one can prove there is no God. †

Tim Childs preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Baldwyn, Mississippi, USA, contributes an audio sermon monthly to *Gospel Gazette Online*, and makes mission trips to Guyana and India.

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Lazarus, Come Forth

Bobby Key

“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”

(John 11:43)

Robert Ingersoll was an atheist and often spoke against God and the Bible. One night in a lecture he was waxing eloquently in showing that the resurrection of Lazarus was a hoax. He declared that the whole affair was pre-arranged between Jesus and Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Lazarus was to pretend that he was sick and feign death until Jesus arrived. When Ingersoll thought he had the audience in the palm of his hand, he asked the following question with emphasis: “Can anyone tell me why Jesus said, ‘Lazarus, come forth?’” A white-haired man arose and confidently replied, “Yes Sir, I can tell you. If my blessed Lord had not said, ‘Lazarus,’ the entire graveyard of Bethany would have come out of their tombs to greet him!” Now, I wouldn’t be at all surprised if this didn’t about take the wind out of Ingersoll.

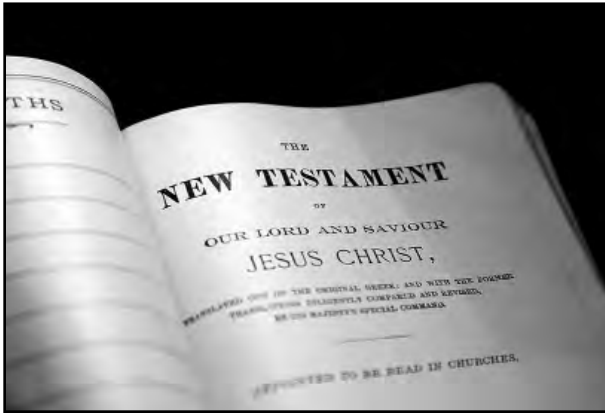
Ingersoll’s supposition that the resurrection of Lazarus was a trumped-up plot is false to the core. Odor and decay were obvious. It would have presented a real problem to have lived four days in a small tomb with a stone blocking the door (John 11:38). And then the strips of cloth that bound the embalming spices tightly against the body and head would surely have smothered him.

Even though William Barclay said he didn’t know what happened at Bethany, every Bible believer knows! There was a resurrection! Ask Lazarus. The same Lord who could bring Lazarus back from the dead can raise our vile body. In fact, the day will come when all the dead shall be raised by His mighty power. Without this hope, we would be of all men most miserable. *“There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust”* (Acts 24:15). This I believe! †

Bobby Key preached for many years for the church of Christ in Miami, Oklahoma, USA.

Christians and the Word

Owen B. Moseley



In 2 Timothy 3:16,17 Paul said: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* As a Christian, do you believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God (that is, God-breathed)? If you don’t, there is very little real need to read and study the Bible. If you do believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then reading and studying it should be seen as desirable and necessary. Why? Because Paul says Scripture is profitable and can make an individual complete and thoroughly equipped. Who among us does not want to profit? Who among us does not want to be complete and thoroughly equipped?

The Old Testament provides examples of God’s dealings with man; His justice, mercy, and love also bring promise concerning the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament presents Jesus as the Messiah. The Bible, through promises that were fulfilled, can produce a complete trust in Jesus as Savior. A study of the Scriptures will lead us to a personal knowledge of Jesus. That knowledge

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should cause us to love Him as He loved us. That resulting love should cause us to do what we can to please Him, including sharing His love with others.

The Bible should serve as “food” for all Christians. The Scriptures can only serve as effective and life sustaining food for us if the words of the Bible are internalized and allowed to grow within us and guide our every action. To be an effective Christian, we must understand the Scriptures. In truth, there are very few passages in the Bible that are not understandable. To believe otherwise is to question God’s ability to communicate to man what He expects from man; that is an unwise position to take.

Understanding is enhanced through constant reading, praying, and meditation. However, understanding is not the ultimate goal to achieve from studying God’s Word. The ultimate goal is to gain an understanding that will serve as a basis for being able to apply the Scriptures to our lives in such a manner that we will live a life that is pleasing to God. In Romans 12:1,2 Paul said: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* We don’t want to be like the old Scotsman whose wife called him several times, and finally in irritation she asked if he “was-a-hearing her.” He replied, “Aye, I’m ahearing ye: but I’m no’ heeding ye!” As a faithful Christian, we need to hear (understand) and heed what God tells us in His word. We need to apply His Word in such a way that we conform our lives to His will.

Knowing Scriptures and understanding Scriptures serve as the basis for being a faithful Christian; knowing and understanding do not make us faithful Christians. To be faithful Christians we must do at least five things:

1. Continue to search the Scriptures for their meaning for our lives.
2. Meditate on the Scriptures and pray about them.
3. Revere and honor God who gave us the Scriptures.
4. Apply the Scriptures to our lives so that our lives are consistent with them.
5. Share the Scriptures with non-Christians.
6. Jesus summed it all up in John 8:31 when He said: *“...if you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”* †

Owen B. Moseley serves as an elder for the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

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Clarity of Scripture

Greg Tidwell

Modern disbelief often paints the text of Scripture as hopelessly obscure and far removed from our current situation. Christians, however, know better.

The Word of God Is Readable

God, showing His mercy within the pages of Scripture, provides us with all that we need to know concerning faith and right living. God's Word is not hidden and esoteric, but public and assessable.

Other faiths seek special illumination for a select few who attain certain heights of enlightenment. Christianity promotes the dignity and responsibility of each person, not of a special elite.

The Word of God Is Understandable

There are, of course, difficult passages in Scripture. Some passages are hard to interpret from the original languages. Other texts present challenging concepts, open to various interpretations.

On the whole, however, the message of Scripture is remarkably clear. The vital issues of faith and godliness come through powerfully in commands, examples, and reasonable inferences.

When readers approach the Bible with the reverence due the Word of God, a strong consensus emerges as to His will.

The Word of God Is Applicable

The salvation outlined in Scripture is God's own prescription for humanity. He knows our every weakness and frailty. God has not asked us to do the impossible. Yes, we will strive and fall short, but the way of salvation contains the promise of restoration and forgiveness to the penitent.

Through the obedience of faith, God is able to make us stand in the righteousness of Christ. The Bible presents a realistic approach to living that addresses our every situation. †

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Comparing the Two Covenants

Royce Frederick

Two paintings of different scenes by one artist often contain many similarities. Likewise, God's Old and New Covenants contain similarities. For example, both say it is wrong to murder and commit adultery. Both say we should love and obey God and love others. However, there are also many differences between the two Covenants.

The Old was God's covenant with Israel only (Deuteronomy 5:1-4; Ephesians 2:11-13). The New is God's covenant with people of all nations (Mark 16:15,16; Galatians 3:28).

The mediator of the Old was Moses (Galatians 3:19; John 1:17). The Mediator of the New is Jesus (Hebrews 9:15).

The Old was dedicated with the blood of animals (Exodus 24:1-8). The New was dedicated with the blood of God's only Son, Jesus (John 3:16; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15-26).

The Old ended when Jesus died on the cross (Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:24,25). The New began when Jesus died on the cross (Hebrews 9:15-17).

The Old was "*a yoke of bondage*" upon the Jews (Galatians 5:1-3; see Acts 15:10). The New is "*the perfect law of liberty*" for all nations (James 1:25; Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:19).

The Old included a tabernacle, and later a temple, made of physical materials (Exodus 36-40; 1 Kings 6-7). The New includes a spiritual temple, the church, built on Christ as the foundation, with Christians as "*living stones*" (1 Corinthians 3:11,16,17; 1 Peter 2:4,5).

The Old involved many holy days, sacrifices and feasts, and Israel often had to assemble in one city (Leviticus 23; Exodus 34:24, Deuteronomy 12:1-11,26,27). The New involves only one holy memorial, the Lord's Supper, on the first day of each week, with Christians assembling in places throughout the world (John 4:21-24; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-26 with 16:2).

The Old involved "tithing" (requirement to give a tenth), animal sacrifices, burning incense, and musical instruments in worship (Leviticus 3-7; 27:30;

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16:12; 2 Chronicles 29:25). The New does not include any of these, but involves singing, praying, preaching and teaching, the Lord's Supper, and giving as each person decides in his heart (Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15,16; 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Acts 20:7).

The Old allowed men from only one tribe in the nation of Israel to be priests (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 3:1-10; Hebrews 7:5). In the New, there is no separate priesthood, for all Christians are priests (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6), with Jesus Christ as our High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16).

The Old promised the fruitful land of Canaan as Israel's inheritance (Exodus 6:4; 1 Kings 8:56). The New promises an eternal inheritance in heaven for all Christians who remain faithful (John 14:2; 1 Peter 1:4; Revelation 2:10). †

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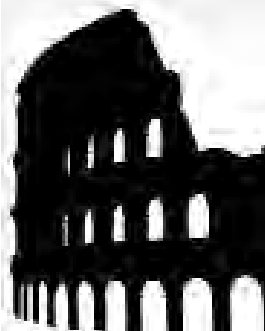
Defending Our Faith

Ernest S. Underwood

The story is told, and it is a true one, that two men of conflicting beliefs were in a public debate about some point of doctrine, whether it was from God or from man. In one of the sessions of a scheduled four-night debate, one of the preachers was showing from the Scriptures that the doctrine taught by the other was false, and condemned by those Scriptures. As he was pressing his point, the other preacher jumped upon the speaker's platform and gave a resounding slap to the face of his opponent. A hush fell over the audience. The one who had been slapped was a rather large man. As he towered over the one who just slapped him, he glared at him for a long moment, then quietly spoke into the microphone, "Go ahead and defend your doctrine with your fists, you can't defend it with the Word of God." As you can imagine, for all practical purposes, this ended the debate.

How do you defend what you believe? With feelings, with deathbed tales, with what your "pastor" says, or do you, can you, defend it with the Holy Word of God?

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Romans 7:1-12

Jerry Bates

1. How long does the law have dominion over a person? (v. 1)
2. How long did God intend for a woman to be married to a man? (v. 2)
3. What happens if he dies? (v. 2)
4. If she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is considered to be an _____. (v. 3)
5. What does the illustration of marriage have to do with Paul's topic of keeping the law? (v. 4)
6. Through the _____ Christ we become _____ to the law. (v. 4)
7. We are married to Christ so that we might _____ _____ to God. (v. 4)
8. Since we have been delivered from the law, we can now serve in _____ of the Spirit and not in the _____ of the letter (v. 6).
9. Does the fact that the law aroused sinful passions (v. 5) mean that the law itself was sinful? (v. 7)
10. Through the law we come to know sin. What does that mean? (v. 7)
11. Apart from the law sin is _____. (v. 8)
12. The law was intended to bring _____, but it brought _____ instead. (v. 10)
13. The law is _____ and the commandment _____. (v. 12)

(See inside back cover for answers)

1 Or do you not know, brethren, (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then, if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress, but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him, who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. 9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. 12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. (Romans 7:1-12, New King James Version)

Note: Paul continues his discussion of the contrast between grace and law. He first uses the marriage law to show that we cannot serve both grace and law. That would be comparable to committing adultery. However, since the law did not justify man, that did not mean the law was somehow sinful. The problem was not the law, it was man. Paul uses himself as an example. In the innocence of childhood, he was sinless. However, when he became aware of the significance of the law, sin came to life and he died, spiritually separated from God. Thus, the law, which was intended to bring life, resulted in death. The reason was the weakness of man, not the law.

DOCTRINES THAT MAKE GOSPEL PREACHING UNNECESSARY

Albert Gardner

1. Universal Salvation

Some hold to the idea that everyone will be saved in the final day, hardened criminals along with sweet innocent babies. Hell is not a pretty doctrine, but it is in the Bible. In fact, the Greek word meaning eternal punishment is used twelve times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6).

It should be noted that our Lord Jesus Christ used this word eleven of the twelve times. He is the one who taught about eternal punishment. Some will be lost, and that makes universal salvation a false doctrine. If finally all will be saved, it would be useless to preach the Gospel to save them. There are conditions of salvation, and those who obey will be saved.

2. Calvin's Concept of Predestination and Election

This is the belief that before the foundation of the world, God chose individuals. If we are one of the elect (chosen), we will be saved, and we can do nothing to be lost. If we are one of the non-elect, we will be lost, and there is nothing we can do to be saved.

The choosing that God did before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4,5) was not individuals, but was for those in Christ to be holy and blameless in love. If the elect will be saved anyway, and the lost can do nothing to be saved, there would be no need to preach the Gospel to either of them to save them.

3. Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit

This is the view that the Holy Spirit, separate and apart from the Word of God, comes to the individual and converts the sinner. I have never seen it happen. In Africa and India, I have never seen a Christian in a backward village, unless a Gospel preacher had been there and preached the truth. When people hear, believe, and obey the Gospel, they have been converted by the Holy Spirit. "*The seed is the word of God*" (Luke 8:11). The Holy Spirit gives life to the Word, and people are converted by the Word. That is why Jesus said, "...*preach the gospel to every creature.*" There are no Christians where the Gospel has not gone.

If the Holy Spirit will convert one person directly, why does He not convert

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everyone? If He converts one but not all, would He be a respecter of persons?

4. The Belief that All Religions Are Just Different Roads to Heaven

We live in a very tolerant age. We certainly ought to be kind, patient, and considerate, but not to the extent that we disregard and reject the very Book that will one day be the standard by which we will be judged (Revelation 20:12).

If I know my heart, I want everyone to be saved and none to be lost. However, reality says that will not be the case. Jesus taught, *“and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matthew 25:46).

The way we live determines our destiny. Our Lord stressed this point. *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28,29).

I have the deepest respect for the sincere Hindu, Muslim, and even the cults. A person is not wrong because he does not agree with me, and he is not right because he does agree with me. What is the standard of right and wrong? Hear Jesus: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven**”* (Matthew 7:21).

If all religions lead to heaven, that would make Gospel preaching unnecessary for those in any kind of religion. Our Lord did not come to make people religious, but to set people **right** religiously. The written Word of God is our guide to take us from this world to the next. Only truth can do that. *“And we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). †

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

GOD’S PLAN FOR SAVING MAN

God’s Grace — Ephesians 2:8

Christ’s Blood — Romans 5:9

The Holy Spirit’s Word —

2 Timothy 3:16,17

Sinner’s Faith — Acts 16:31

Sinner’s Confession — Romans 10:10

Sinner’s Baptism — 1 Peter 3:21

Christian’s Work — James 2:24

Christian’s Hope — Romans 8:24

Christian’s Endurance —

Matthew 24:13

What Do You Do When Your Religion Leaves You?

Rod Kyle

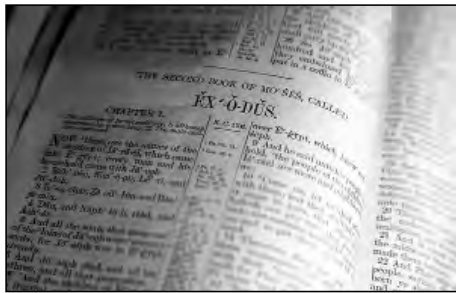
Many disillusioned people know the meaning of this question. In our relativistic world, absolutes are fading away. People change. Their opinions change. What once was considered an essential truth is now being challenged. Religions are changing!

If truth is relative, then even more religious changes will occur. When the majority in a religious group believe that homosexuality, abortion, and euthanasia are permissible, then the creeds of that group will change to reflect such opinions. And those “diehards” in such groups will be called “legalists, judgmental, bigots, and troublemakers”!

Know the experience?

The simple truth confirmed in the Bible is this — if God says it is so, *it is so!* He is not in the habit of changing (Malachi 3:6). He alone makes absolutes, absolute (Job 38-42). He tells us that His Word does not change (Matthew 24:35). It will be the standard of judgment for all of mankind on judgment day (John

12:48, Revelation 20:12). There will be no escaping your judgment day confrontation with the Bible (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10).



The Lord’s church, revealed in the New Testament, does not change its beliefs either. It is charged to uphold all of the teachings of its Head (Ephesians 1:22) and to be the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). If your church has left you, guess what? It’s not the church of which Christ is the Head. Do you need, then, to search your Bible and search for those people who are sticking with its teachings? Do you need to heed 2 Corinthians 6:17? †

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.

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 men 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 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

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

not keep his garments, “lest they see his shame”. To all children of God, the practice is shameful! To God, such are “deserving of death” (Romans 1:32). †

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and the island of Trinidad in the West Indies, and he now lives in Waycross, Georgia, USA.

Church Organization

Independent congregations (Acts 14:23)
Obligated to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4)
Ruled by elders (Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17)
Served by deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)
Taught by teachers (Hebrews 5:12-14)
Taught by preachers (Romans 10:13-15)
Served by members (Romans 12:4-8)

Christian Worship

In spirit and in truth (John 4:24)
Each first day of the week (Acts 20:7)
Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-29)
Singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)
Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
Praying (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:15)
Preaching (Acts 20:7)

Christian Vocation

Take the Gospel to the lost world (Mark 16:15)
Rescue fallen Christians (James 5:19-20)
Learn God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
Help the poor (Galatians 6:10)

Christian Doctrine

God’s Word alone (Revelation 22:18-19)
New Testament (Hebrews 9:15)
Gospel (Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:6-9)
Not human creeds (Mark 7:7)

The Power of the Resurrection

Samuel Osei Young

Many are power-drunk, but none is able to reach or match the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection, which is solid and incomparable. Thomas Arnold, the great classics scholar who served as a professor of modern history at Oxford University, said, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best attested fact in human history." That is, nothing could destroy or disprove or successfully deny the power of the resurrection.

This Power Made Manifest in Ages Past

(1) This power was displayed in creation. The Word of God has proved to be supreme from generation to generation ever since the creation was accomplished by this power. God spoke His word and the whole universe and all things therein were created. The total segregation (separation) of the heavens and earth was accomplished by the power which the Word possesses (Genesis 1:6-10).

(2) By this power the prophets spoke. The prophetic sayings never fail. God, in His dynamic and immacu-

late plans, chose holy men to proclaim beforehand the display of this power. *"But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave for he shall receive me"* (Psalm 49:15).

(3) This power was employed by Jesus Christ on the dead. By this power He restored the widow's son who had died and was on his way for burial, and they glorified God (Luke 7:12-16). We read in Luke 8:54,55 regarding the daughter of Jairus: *"And He put them all out and took her by the hand, and called saying, 'Maid, arise', and her spirit came again and she arose straightway and He commanded to give her meat."*

(4) This power was confirmed by His sayings. *"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again..."* (John 10:17-19). God raised Him (Acts 10:40). The Holy Spirit raised Him (Romans 8:11). In John 2:19,21, *"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days*

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

I will raise it up...but He spoke of the temple of His body.”

The Hour of This Power

This power was overwhelming and irresistible. In Matthew 27, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees came to consult Pilate to go and seal the sepulcher with a stone, setting a watch. But neither stone, nor seal, nor soldiers could withstand the power of God! When the time was due: *“Behold, there was a great earthquake, for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat”* (Matthew 28:2).

The inferior power was defeated by the power of the resurrection. *“And for fear of Him the keepers did shake and become as dead men. Amen”* (Matthew 28:4).

The Power Is the Hope of the Christian

Christ is the Hope of Glory (Colossians 3:27). *“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised”* (1 Corinthians 15:16). *“Marvel not at this for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28,29). Paul stated categorically that in a moment, in the

twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.



We must be prepared for the unleashing of this power! My dear reader, it is absolute truth that all will be touched by this power. Are you sure when this power comes in its glory, eternal life will be yours? Perhaps you are not sure of your standing. Know this: Jesus died for all sinners, including you, because salvation is in Him (Acts 4:12). To possess that salvation which is in Christ you must: Repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:49), and be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), for your sins to be washed away (Acts 22:16), and to walk in newness of Christ faithfully till death. †

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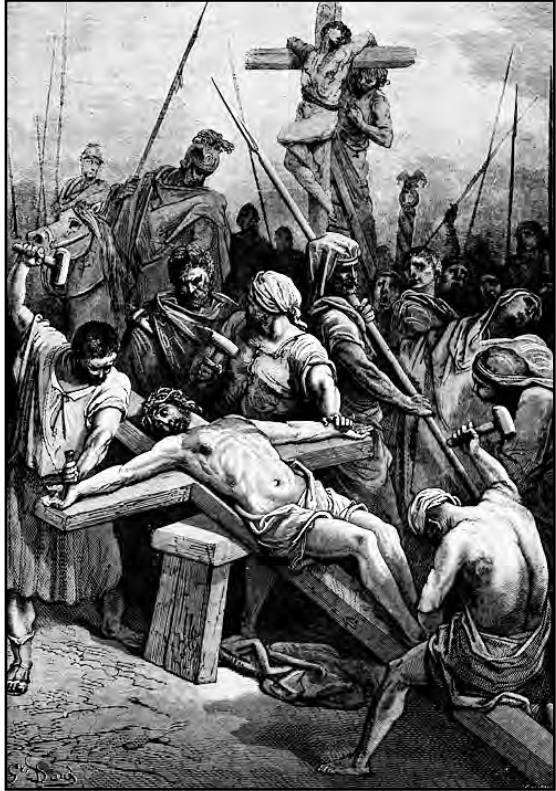
The Cross

Todd O'Donnell

God tells us in Deuteronomy 29:29 that the secret things belong to Him. We have had certain things revealed to us, but other things He has not revealed. God also tells us that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8,9). And when God answered the questioning by Job, He made it clear that Job did not know many things. In fact, God went out of His way to show Job that mankind does not have all the answers, and mankind does not know all of the reasons as to the where's and why's and how's of this life. The fact is, God does what is right and necessary, regardless of whether we understand or comprehend what He does.

I say all of that to say this: We may have plenty of questions in regard to Christ's death on the cross. Why did Christ have to die for our

sins? Why couldn't God just accept the blood of a bull and forgive sin? What would have happened if the Jews did accept Jesus; would He



still have died on the cross? Why was such a painful way of death chosen for the Messiah? On and on we could go with questions surrounding the death of our Savior on the cross. But at the end of the day, Christ was

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still crucified on a cross because God demanded it.

For reasons that we probably could not understand this side of heaven, God needed Christ to die on the cross. In the Garden, Jesus prayed for the cup of suffering and separation from God to be passed.



I'm sure if there was another way possible for man to have sins taken away, then God would have given the go ahead. I am convinced that there was absolutely no other way for the

sin problem to be worked out other than Christ's death on the cross.

Paul says, "...but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:23-25). I don't have to understand every single detail and every bit of significance in regard to Christ's death on the cross to appreciate it. I know that Christ's death has given me the opportunity to have eternal life that no other could have done. I accept God's wisdom and judgment in choosing the cross of Calvary as a means of salvation for me.

It is my prayer that we can all grow to appreciate the death of Christ more and more in our lives, and that our lives will reflect the thankfulness and gratitude that we owe to God for sending Christ to the cross. †

Todd O'Donnell works with the church in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

SALVATION

Calling on the Name of the Lord

Travis L. Quertermous

Foreseeing the Gospel Age, the prophet Joel predicted, *“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, among the remnant who the Lord calls”* (Joel 2:32). The first part of that verse is quoted twice in the New Testament, by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:21 and by the apostle Paul in Romans 10:13.

It is not uncommon for evangelical preachers to quote these verses and misapply them by asking sinners to pray “the sinner’s prayer” in order to become Christians. Very often they will also quote Romans 10:10 in this connection as well, wherein Paul said, *“For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.”* The so-called “sinner’s prayer” is an admission to the Lord that one is lost in sin and is an invitation for Him to come into their hearts as their personal Savior.

But that is not how the alien sinner calls on the name of the Lord so as to be saved. Remember that Peter

also quoted Joel 2:32 in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:21. When those convicted of their sins asked him, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37), Peter did not lead them in the sinner’s prayer! In fact, one will search the Bible in vain for such an example! What he did tell them was, *“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”* (Acts 2:38).

Thus, we learn that calling upon the name of the Lord means to obey the Gospel plan of salvation. In other words, when we compare Romans 10:10, Romans 10:13, and Acts 2:38, we learn that one calls upon the name of the Lord through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and that this results in one’s salvation from sin.

Another example of an alien sinner calling upon the name of the Lord is Saul of Tarsus. After meeting the risen Lord on the Damascus road, Saul fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9,11). If prayer ever saved an alien sinner, surely it would have saved

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Saul! But Christ sent a preacher named Ananias, who said to Saul, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling upon the name of the Lord*”



(Acts 22:16). Saul’s sins still needed to be washed away, even though he had been praying for three days! Once again, we see that calling upon the name of the Lord means obeying the Gospel, including baptism, not praying the so-called “sinner’s prayer”.

Brethren, let us ever stand for the truth and oppose error on the Gospel plan of salvation. Sincere souls are being misled into believing they are saved when they are still in their sins. Let us teach sinners how to truly “*call on the name of the Lord*” to be saved. †

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The only plan of salvation that will matter on eternity’s shore as all of human kind stands before the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ will be the one plan of salvation found upon the pages of inspiration in the New Testament. No other plan of salvation, no matter how cunningly devised by mortal man, will do at that crucial moment. Therefore, it behooves every reflective soul alive today to search out in God’s Word, the only divine plan of salvation.

Up From the Grave

David A. Sargent

In a cemetery in Hanover, Germany is a grave on which were placed huge slabs of granite and marble, cemented together and fastened with heavy steel clasps. It belongs to a woman who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Yet strangely, she directed in her will that her grave be made so secure that if there were a resurrection, it could not reach her. On the marker were inscribed these words: "This burial place must NEVER be opened."

In time, a seed, covered over by the stones, began to grow. Slowly it pushed its way through the soil and out from beneath them. As the trunk enlarged, the great slabs were gradually shifted so that the steel clasps were wrenched from their sockets — a tiny seed had become a tree that had pushed aside the stones.

The dynamic life force contained in that little seed is a faint reflection of the tremendous power of God's creative word that someday will call to life the bodies of ALL who are in their graves. Jesus said, "*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming*

in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28,29).

The divine guarantee of our own resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son. "*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits [i.e., the first of many to follow] of those who have fallen asleep [died]. For since by man [Adam] came death, by Man [Jesus] also came the resurrection of the dead*" (1 Corinthians 15:20,21).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an integral part of the Gospel ("Good News") of salvation through Christ (read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The good news is that the righteousness of God is imputed to (or credited to the account) of "*those of us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our offenses, and was raised for our justification*" (Romans 3:24,25).

Unbelief cannot deter the resurrection. But faith in and obedience to

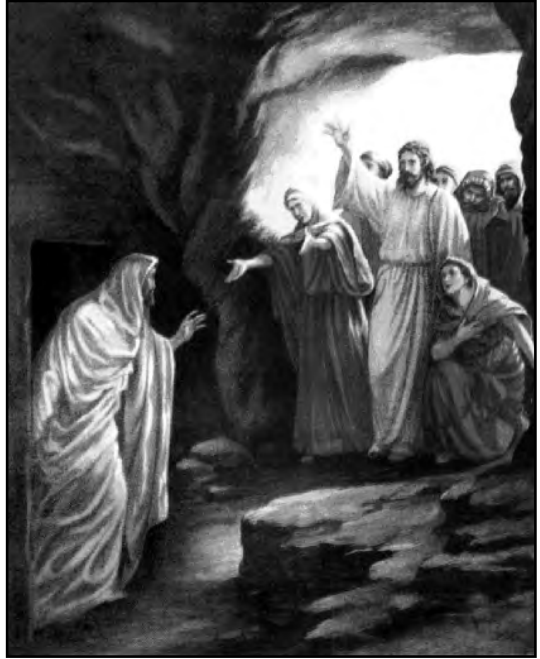
SALVATION

the risen Christ opens the door to blessings that His resurrection guarantees — a glorious new spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:35–58) and a home in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Robert Lowry proclaimed the power of Jesus' resurrection in the lyrics of the song, "Up From the Grave He Arose" — "Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes..." And because of Jesus, we can share in His victory over sin and death!

Won't you, out of an obedient faith (Acts 16:30,31), turn from sin in repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9,10), confess Christ (Romans 10:9,10), and be buried with Him in baptism so that you can be raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3,4)? †

David A. Sargent preaches for the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, USA.



*“If in this life only
we have hope in Christ,
we are of all men
the most pitiable”
(1 Corinthians 15:19).*

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Jesus Christ is
the same yesterday,
today, and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

1. What a profound statement! But do we fully understand what the Hebrew writer, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is saying? “Jesus Christ” ... who is He? “Jesus” is the name given to the baby born to Mary, the Son of God. “Christ” means “the Messiah”, “the anointed of God”. “Jesus Christ” is the name of God’s Son in the flesh, anointed and chosen to be the Savior of mankind.

2. But *how* is He the same, yesterday, today, and forever? Was He “Jesus Christ” before He was born in the flesh? No. In the beginning was “the Word”; the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1:1-3) But now we begin the line of demarcation: The Word was made flesh — “Jesus Christ”, emptying Himself, and taking the form of man (Philippians 2:5-8).

3.
As this “new” person — “Jesus Christ” — He was made in all things like His brethren (Hebrews 2:17). He faced temptations as we do, yet He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). He died as the perfect One, the acceptable sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 9:11-15). He conquered death for us, being resurrected and ascending to the Father (Hebrews 2:14,15). He reigns there now, as “Jesus Christ”, God’s Son and our brother. The eternal picture, after He *became* “Jesus Christ” is that He never goes back to being “the Word”, equal with God, but Romans 8:17 declares that if we are children of God, we will be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ! The Hebrew writer was looking back to the earthly life of Jesus Christ, he was looking at His current existence as the resurrected and reigning Jesus Christ, and he was looking forward to the Jesus Christ after the judgment, eternal heir of God with His brothers and sisters.

PROVERBS 17:22



A couple parked their new car in the last row of cars on the parking lot at church on Sunday morning. They didn't want to make a show of it.

After the service was over and people were mingling outside, the man accidentally hit the panic button on his car key. Immediately his new car's horn blared repeatedly and the headlights started flashing. A friend teased, "Wouldn't it have been better to just put a few lines in the church bulletin?"



During a college orchestra rehearsal the percussion section kept making mistakes. The frustrated professor stopped his conducting and snarled at the drummers, "They give you a couple of sticks, put you in the back, and call you a percussionist."

One of the drummers whispered to the one next to him, "And if you're too dumb to hang on to both sticks, they take one away, put you in the front, and call you a conductor."



A surgeon was relaxing on his sofa at home one evening when the phone rang. He calmly answered it and heard the familiar voice of a colleague on the other end of the line.

"We need a fourth for poker," said the friend.

"I'll be right over," whispered the doctor.

As he was putting on his coat, his wife asked, "Is it serious?"

"Oh yes, quite serious," said the doctor gravely. "In fact, three doctors are there already!"



Bill had fished all day and hadn't caught a single fish. On his way home he stopped at a local seafood store and told the clerk, "Just stand over there and throw me five of your largest trout."

"Throw them? What for?" asked the amazed clerk.

"Well, I want to be able to tell Sue that I caught them. I don't want to tell a lie."

PROVERBS 17:22

A distraught senior citizen phoned her doctor's office. "Is it true that the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so," the doctor told her.

There was a moment of silence before the senior lady replied, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious is my condition? My prescription is marked, 'No Refills.'"



The girl's father said to the young man standing before him, "I understand that you want to become my son-in-law."

"No, sir, not really," the young man answered, "but if I marry your daughter, I don't see how it can be avoided."



This nice young blonde was talking to a friend and said, "We had Jeff's parents over for dinner. I wanted to serve a roast, but all I had was hamburger. I suddenly had this flash of genius...I put the hamburger meat in a pan, put it in the oven, and set the controls for roast. I don't understand though. It still came out hamburger."

A word to the wise — Those who feel it is alright to tell white lies soon go color-blind.



A city slicker misjudged the farmer's knowledge of the going price of farmland. He told the farmer that he was interested in buying \$500 worth of his land.

"Fine," said the farmer. "You bring your wheelbarrow, and I'll fill it up."



Have you noticed how some folks are so kind, polite, and sweet...until they come in and find that you are sitting in their pew?



In case you aren't familiar with the term "procrastinator," that is a person who suffers from hardening of the oughteries.



It's said that baseball great, George Brett, was talking about a golfing experience he had. He said, "I was three over. One over a house, one over a patio, and one over a swimming pool."

Quit Worrying and Pray

Loy Mitchell

“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and God’s peace which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).

Do Not Worry or Be Anxious

This teaching reminds us of the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 6:25-34. Men worry about having enough food to eat and what they will wear. However, God feeds the birds of the air and He clothes the lilies of the field. Will He not take care of you and me? Paul was a prisoner in Rome with plenty of reasons to be anxious, but he is very clear: **“HAVE NO ANXIETY ABOUT ANYTHING!”** Who is in control? When trouble comes your way, be assured you have a God who cares.

Pray to God

Don’t worry! Pray! Worry and anxiety show a lack of faith in God, Who has the power to help you overcome your anxieties. The solution to our cares and difficulties is set forth by Paul. Take everything by prayer and supplication to God. LET YOUR RE-

QUESTS BE KNOWN TO GOD! He does hear our prayers. He does answer prayers and requests. Yes, it is true that sometimes His answers are not what we thought they would be, but He did answer. He still knows what is best.

God’s Peace Will Guard You

Look at the wonderful promises of God. Stop worrying, and start praying. The result is wonderful. Instead of a mind filled with anxiety, God will grant you a peace that is beyond man’s comprehension. This beautiful peace will guard your hearts and minds. The heart need not be troubled and destroyed by worry. God will give us peace!

Therefore, let us quit worrying about our children or our other loved ones. Let us pray and teach them about God. Let us not worry about our jobs. Let us take EVERYTHING in prayer to God. What about a possible war? Take it to God in prayer. He wants to hear your requests. Peace is available to all who do His will by not worrying, and by praying instead. †

Loy Mitchell is a former long term missionary to Zimbabwe and now lives in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA. He makes one or more mission trips annually back to Zimbabwe.

A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

Wayne Barrier

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy of the responsibility of committing to others the things that Timothy had learned from him (2 Timothy 2:2). Others should be taught the things required to be teachers of the Gospel. Timothy also was reminded that this work requires one to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:3). What are the characteristics and responsibilities of a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

First, a good soldier understands his mission. The mission of soldiers of Christ is to take the Gospel to every person in all the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). First century Christians succeeded in doing this job. They were willing to sacrifice as much as the mission required. Many were persecuted and killed as the mission was carried to completion (Colossians 1:23). Their level of dedication to the task was according to the standards given by Jesus in Luke 9:23-25 when he stated, *“If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whosoever loses his life for my sake will save it”*.

Second, the soldier of Jesus Christ must have compassion for the lost. This compassion is described in Matthew 9:35-38 as follows, *“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to his disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest’.”* Billions are living in the world today that have never heard the message of salvation in Christ.

Third, the Christian soldier must have Christ-like, Godly character. Traits should include courage (2 Timothy 1:7), integrity of commitment (2 Timothy 1:8,9), Christian virtues (2 Peter 1:5-10); Christians must be bearers of fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-24), forgiving, kind and tenderhearted (Ephesians 4:32), obedient (Philippians 2:8), willing to work (Philippians 2:12), knowledgeable of God’s will (2 Timothy 2:15), and filled with love (John 15:12; 1 John 3:16).

The work of the church is done by good soldiers of Christ. We must each equip ourselves and enter the battle to help everyone know Christ and His will. †

Wayne Barrier of Florence, Alabama, USA, is a member of the World Evangelism Team.



Scheduling Perils and a Revised Philosophy

Glenn Colley

There are 168 hours in a week, and there are times in all of our lives when that just isn't enough. We have schedules stretched so tightly that there's hardly time left to breathe. But this article is not about those who have occasional "killer weeks" when things get too busy and chaotic. It is about those for whom it has become a way of life — and not a very good life at that. It can become a serious matter for a lot of reasons. When we are stretched too thin and worn out week after week, we are more easily disposed to sin, and serious commitment to obeying God can be difficult for us.

If you and your spouse are consistently working yourself ragged and still can't fulfill all the weekly responsibilities, you have probably just assumed more responsibility than the Lord intended you to have. Perhaps you should

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

re-evaluate what you are doing in view of your biblical priorities, and reduce and remove those things that are superfluous. You can't do everything, and some of the obligations you have made for yourself may have become unreasonable. But how do we know what things to remove? Let's see if the apostle Paul can shed some light on this.

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul wrote, "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*" "Excess" means crazy actions which are done by those who are drunk with wine. Paul urges us to be filled with the Spirit. This is not a mystical experience, but taking the Word of God and letting it indwell and affect every part of our being. To be filled with God's Spirit is to be filled with His Word and let it control all our thoughts and actions.

If you and your spouse are consistently working yourself ragged and still can't fulfill all the weekly responsibilities, you have probably just assumed more responsibility than the Lord intended you to have.

Then we go to Ephesians 5:21 "*...submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*" Here Paul points to the relationships in life which require submission to authority.

First, a husband to his wife (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Second, a parent to his child (Ephesians 6:1-4; 6:5-9).

Then, a master to his slave (Ephesians 6:5-9). This corresponds to our employer/employee relationship.

Observe that this is the same pattern Paul used when he wrote to the Colossian Christians in Colossians 3:16-25.

The conclusion we should draw is simple. Our foundational priorities should be in this order: my personal walk with God, my relationship to my spouse, my child-rearing, and my job. Is that the order your sometimes chaotic life is in?

A Christian husband/father in another state recently called a family meeting to declare that they had grown too busy and unhealthy as a family. "Now", he said, "what things can we do to help us have a more settled lifestyle?"

What a great place to start!



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

Are You Satisfied?

Bonnie Rushmore

We live in a society that wants something other than what we have. It is common for women with curly hair to spend time and money to straighten their hair. Individuals with straight hair pay to have their hair curled. Light skinned people use tanning beds or lotions to darken their skin, and creams are available to lighten dark skin. People living in small houses long for larger houses, and those living in large houses frequently moan about the maintenance of larger houses and wish for smaller ones. Newer and better products entice us to discard useful, properly functioning items and replace them with the latest, greatest gadgets available. During the summer months, we complain it is too hot, and during the winter months, we are cold and wish for warmer weather. Humanity is constantly longing for something better. Unfortunately, many Christians are caught up in this mentality, forgetting the words of the apostle Paul, “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*” (Philippians 4:11).

McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia gives the following definition for contentment:

(autapkeia, 1 Timothy 6:6; “sufficiency,” 2 Corinthians 9:8) is a disposition of mind in which our desires are confined to what we enjoy without murmuring at our lot, or wishing ardently for more. It stands opposed to envy (James 3:16); to avarice (Hebrews 13:5) to pride and ambition (Proverbs 13:10); to anxiety of mind (Matthew 6:25,34); to murmurings and repinings (1 Corinthians 10:10). Contentment does not imply unconcern about our welfare, or that we should not have a sense of anything uneasy or distressing; nor does it give any countenance to idleness, or prevent diligent endeavors to improve our circumstances. It implies, however, that our desires of worldly good be moderate; that we do not indulge unnecessary care, or use unlawful efforts to better ourselves; but that we acquiesce with, and make the best of our condition, whatever it be.

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Contentment is being happy and satisfied in whatever circumstance we find ourselves (Hebrews 13:5). We should be satisfied with our wages (Luke 3:14). We should be happy when we have sufficient food and clothing to sustain life (1 Timothy 6:8). A Christian should be content with his or her life. The attitude of contentment is not gained with more and greater possessions, but through reliance on God and understanding that contentment is a state of mind. We choose to be content or to be unsatisfied and long for more.

**As Christians, our focus should be on God
with satisfaction toward all He has given us,
not on the desire to pamper our physical bodies.**

The wise man Solomon made this request, “*Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God*” (Proverbs 30:8,9). Solomon wanted, and his words encourage us, to desire only what is needed to sustain life. Excess riches or being poor can prohibit one from being content and relying on God.

One who is envious, covetous and prideful will lack contentment in his or her life. Only when these sinful traits are removed from an individual’s life will one learn to be satisfied. The actions of an individual who lacks contentment can have a far-reaching effect on the lives of others. John attributed the actions of Diotrephes to his lack of contentment (3 John 1:9,10). He caused division within the Lord’s Church, and in modern times, Christians who are not content cause division in the church. Children reared in an environment where the adults are focused on greater riches and never satisfied typically carry those traits into their adult lives. An individual who is always complaining (a characteristic of one who is not content) encourages others to complain.

Christians need to learn to be satisfied. Yes, we need to work to provide for our families to the best of our abilities. We should style our hair and dress appropriately so that our looks are becoming to our loved ones. However, our focus should be on God with satisfaction toward all He has given us, not on the desire to pamper our physical bodies.

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). †

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

THE CLOTHES OF SUMMER

Rebecca Shanahan

Well, it's here, the summertime. School is out, the sun is shining, and the beach/pool, or whatever body of water you prefer is beckoning you. It's calling your name and saying, "Let all of your worries go, and come and lie down beside me for awhile."

I must admit that I, too, am a sucker for all things "summer". Ever since I was a little girl (and my mother will agree), I have had a deep fascination with the ocean and all things pertaining to it. To me, one of the most alluring sensations on this physical earth are the ocean breezes and the smell of salt in the air. I love the contrast of a green palm against the blue of the water. Some of the most peaceful moments of my life have been spent swimming around in the tranquil waters of calm seas. However, I am not only allured by calm seas. To me, there is nothing more thrilling than being in a small fishing boat in rough seas during a heavy rain shower, as everyone is frantically scooping out the water from the bottom of the boat. So, as you can see, my affections for the ocean run deep. I love being in coastal areas and always have.

Having said this, there is a big difference between me and pretty much all of the other people that are around when I am at these "watery" locations. If you see me at the ocean, or at a pool in a public location, I am absolutely sure of one thing. You will see that I am dressed in clothes, not a bathing suit or bikini, but in actual clothes, as in a shirt and pants.

You can laugh at the thought of this if you want. Go ahead. It doesn't bother me. I've been doing this ever since I was a child, and the stares and comments don't bother me anymore, although, I must admit that I do find it interesting sometimes to be the only one who is fully dressed and not exposing almost all of my skin — yet I am the one who is being stared at! Why is that?

My point in writing this is not to condemn anyone. I know that I have many close sisters who disagree with my stance on the subject of modesty. All I want is my voice to be heard as to why I do what I do and then you, the reader, can take it or leave it.

We know from Scripture (1 Timothy 2:9,10) that God wants us to dress in modest apparel. I am well aware that this principle forbids overdressing as well as underdressing. We also know that men usually are visually stimulated and can have very difficult times controlling their thoughts when something is put in

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their face. We understand, further, that if a man cannot control his thoughts, then he is sinning (Matthew 5:28). On the flip side, it is sinful for me if I am the one who is pushing someone else to sin (Matthew 18:7; Romans 14:13).

Another factor that I cannot ignore is that I believe that the call for modesty began in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve had committed the first sin the Scripture says that, “... *the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked ...*” (Genesis 4:7). The Scripture goes on to say that they made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves. However, it appears that the coverings they made were not good enough, because verse 21 tells us that God had to make appropriate clothes for them, from the skins of animals. I believe, personally, that this shows that there is a point at which we don’t have on enough clothes to satisfy God’s requirements for modesty.

There is also another dynamic to this. We all know the saying, “What would Jesus do?” But I am here to ask a new question. “What would YOU do if Jesus were physically standing right next to you?” I cannot answer this question for you, and I realize that this thought is just a matter of opinion, but I can’t begin to imagine myself with Jesus, at the ocean or a pool or wherever, and I’m wearing a bikini! Can you? The thought of it makes me laugh — or cringe — inside. Yet, I would also like to point out that Jesus IS with us *all* the time, and if you are with a Christian brother while you are mostly naked, it is like you are with Jesus mostly naked, because your Christian brother, like yourself, has Christ living in him (Galatians 2:20).

I have heard the argument that we can wear whatever we want because we have liberty in Christ Jesus. I believe that we do have liberty, but not that it should be abused. First Peter 2:16 says, “... *yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice [immoral conduct], but as bondservants of God.*” Also, Galatians 5:13 says, “... *do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh ...*”

As I close, I would like to share one more thing. People like to say that people such as myself are against “mixed swimming” or “mixed bathing”. No sisters, I am not against “mixed swimming”. I am against “mixed nudity”.

I hope that you all have a wonderful summer with Jesus! If you are looking for me at the ocean, I’ll be the one with all the clothes on. †

Rebecca Shanahan works with her husband, Scott, in the mission field of Micronesia.

Training in Disobedience

Betty Burton Choate

Little Johnny's mother was saying, "No, don't do that!" but her words fell on deaf ears. Nothing even registered. Without hesitation he walked on, did what he had been forbidden to do, and totally ignored his mother. This time she rushed behind him and halfheartedly swatted his jeans-protected seat, saying, "I told you not to do that." He was not in the least intimidated by the swat, nor was his mind changed about obeying her. In fact, he paid as little attention as he had the previous time he had been told, "NO!" That time, both he and his mother had conveniently ignored his disobedience.

Thus, an innocent child is being trained in the dangerous game of disobedience to authority. Whether he will temper himself with better judgment as he grows older (amazingly, some do), or whether he will develop into an angry, rebellious teenager, or whether he will eventually break enough rules that he will spend time in incarceration, no one can say at this point. But he is being trained, day by day. His parents and society may feel that the lack of discipline is loving and humane, but actually he is being deprived of the vital protective boundaries he needs, in order to grow up to be a secure, well-balanced, law-abiding citizen, and an obedient child of God. When God said to parents, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6), these were the **product instructions for the users.** We ignore them to everyone's peril.

Unruly, defiant, and rebellious children wear heavily on everybody's nerves — their own, as well as their parents, and any other unfortunate person who happens to be in the house. Children are often quicker to figure out situations than parents. They learn what works, what bends parents, what they can get away with, just how long they have to persist in order to wear down the parents' will, and so some children spend an inordinate amount of their time in prolonged bouts of anger, or whining and crying, until they get to do what they want. A happy home? Hardly!

The atmosphere of the home does not have to be this negative picture. Parents not only have the authority to change it, but they have the responsibility before God. What did the verse in Proverbs say? "Train". Let me suggest some areas in which parents need to teach their small children by words, to

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train by example, and to mold them by insisting on obedience. The result will be true happiness in the home.

Training

Children are not born with an awareness of mannerliness. This is part of the work of parents. And to train children in being mannerly, you must be *vigilant* — **pay attention to what they are doing** — again, instruct them verbally, mold them by example, and enforce the training by requiring obedience. Remember, it is not just **children** you are training but the **adults** they will become.

Teach your children to be respectful to adults, to speak to them with respect (in the south in the US, that means “Yes, sir” and “Yes, ma’am”), to obey them, to be helpful, etc.

Teach them to be aware of what others are doing, and of conversations in progress — not to barge in with interruptions, conscious only of themselves and of what is on their minds.

Train them to get along with siblings. Competition and fighting are a growing problem in schools, largely because children are not being taught as they should be in the home that physical violence is absolutely not allowed.

Teach them to be mannerly at the table, to put food into their mouths instead of sucking it in, to chew with their mouths shut, to stay at the table. Children who are allowed to wander unchecked with food and drink in their own homes will naturally do the same elsewhere — not good.

Teach them to be conscious of what they are doing — to look behind themselves and **see** the trail of disarray they may be leaving. Train them to **see**, to pick up after themselves, and to keep their toys and their rooms tidy. It is impossible for one person — the mother — to keep a house straight if the children are continually pulling out stuff and leaving it wherever they abandon it. Training in disorderliness in childhood will likely result in a disorderly adult, a trial to the unfortunate husband or wife who marries that adult.

Punishment

Do you realize that children recognize that they can punish their parents? They seem to be able to whine and cry and throw temper tantrums endlessly — but a child who is sent to a room alone will stop crying almost immediately, because he has no audience on which to inflict the pain of his tears. †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder and publisher of *The Voice of Truth International*, and longtime missionary to India.

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Facing Family Problems

Shan Jackson

There has never been a perfect human family. By that I mean — there has never been a human family that has not faced problems from time to time. Yet, even when such problems are happening, the fact remains that our families are a gift that God gives to bless our lives. Remember, it was God who instituted the family relationship in the world.



From the very heart of His wisdom He designed the family structure. Even at its worst, the family unit has the potential for great and wonderful things. Therefore, we need to guard our families well, and not be hasty to give them up.

The traditional family as designed by God is often scoffed at by our world. The idea that a husband, a wife, and their children can live happily together while each fulfills the roles given in the Bible is an idea that many think has outlived its usefulness. However, Christians have the conviction that God ordained the home and laid down the principles for its joy and fulfillment. God is still willing and able to bless those who obey His will.

God will help us build better homes. We can take it for granted that He wants our homes to be joyful and fulfilling to us. Realizing that is His will, we need to pray fervently for the help of our Heavenly Father in improving the quality of our family relationships. And, His Word will render assistance that will actually make a difference for good. Husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, and yes, even children, ought to make prayer an important part of their family's structure. You see, God has not only given us our families, He is ready to bless our families, as well. †

Shan Jackson preaches for the church of Christ in Port Lavaca, Texas, USA.

Christianity and Trials

Charles Box

James 1:2-8 looks at the Christian's attitude toward trials. *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."*

Observe: *"Count it all joy."* The joy of trials comes when one stays faithful through trials. It brings joy when one comes through a trial with his eyes still focused on Jesus (Hebrews 2:9).

"Let patience have its perfect work." Patience is perseverance or steadfastness (Romans 5:3-5). Patience has to do with our loyalty or commitment to God. Patience leads to Christian maturity.

"Let him ask of God...wisdom." Christians go to God to gain the wisdom necessary to deal with trials. *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"Let him ask in faith." Without faith Christians cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Do not allow trials to cause you to doubt God or His care and love for you. Always believe that God knows what is best for you, wants what is best for you, and is active to bring about what is best.

The person who doesn't have faith in God through trials is *"unstable"* and vacillating because of being *"double-minded"*. With a strong faith, always anchored in God, Christians can say with Paul, *"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). Trials will come, but God is there, caring, loving, helping, and blessing through good times and bad. †

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

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Who Do We Really Love?

(Matthew 10:37)

Charles E. Burch

As we think of this question, of course we are to love everyone. To take on the characteristics of our Heavenly Father, we must love all people. Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Therefore, we see that God loved everyone, so must we.



Who do we really love? Let's ask it another way, who do we really love most? Now the question takes on additional meaning. Jesus spoke the following words, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”* (Matthew 10:37). The closest fleshly ties, when they come into competition with our duties to God, must be disregarded, but only when there is a conflict. Jesus and His name can be second to none other; we must love Him above all others, or else we will not

have His love. The truth of God, recorded in the Bible, is more authoritative than a parent. Jesus has done more for us than the nearest relative can ever possibly do. Jesus must have full control of the heart and life. If we let any earthly tie have precedence over our love for Jesus, we are not worthy of Him. Jesus

TEXTUAL STUDIES

will not dwell in the heart without being supreme.

Luke penned it this way: *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:26). To hate means “to love less”. Therefore, we must love everyone and everything less than we love our Lord. If not, we are not worthy of His love. Now, who do we really love most? The answer must be, our Lord!



He is not forbidding us to love our family! He is simply saying that He must be first in our love and service. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:25). We must love our family. This is a direct command from God. We cannot please God unless we have the proper love for our family. The apostle Paul told husbands how much to love their wives, *“even as Christ also loved the church”*, but we must love the Lord and put Him before our family or anyone else.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). If we can keep this thought before us, we can put Him first. Now this doesn't mean first in *some things*, but first in *everything*. A strong faith enables us to put the Lord first in all things, including our love. We can have that strong faith when we are willing to go to the source of faith. Paul tells us how to obtain that degree of faith. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). Heaven will surely be worth it all! †

Charles E. Burch is a retired Gospel preacher living in St. Elmo, Alabama, USA.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

The Search for Happiness

Owen Cosgrove



It's an amazing statement when one considers the circumstances in which it was written. From prison in Rome, Paul wrote to the church at Philippi:

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11-13).

In a world that seems to be desperately seeking pleasures and happiness, this passage by the beloved apostle has many good lessons for

every person in every age. Some that come to mind are:

1. **Contentment is desirable, not only for our own happiness, but for those who are around us.** God wants His people to find a measure of joy in life even as we want it for our children. Bitterness, wrath, anger, and malice are to be put away from us. That's God's will (Ephesians 4:31).

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2. **Cheerfulness is personal.** No one else can do it for us. Paul said, *“I have learned...”* Many times we would like to find happiness for someone else, but each must seek and find his own.
3. **Gladness is learned, just as are most other attitudes.** *“I have learned...”* Those who expect to “find” happiness or have it “given” to them will be disappointed. Contentment is an intelligent and reasonable way of thinking that has been learned by meeting reality and making the best possible adjustment to it.
4. **Happiness does not always depend on external circumstances.** Even in difficult times, Paul learned to adjust, to be thankful, and to depend upon God.
5. **Gladness is tied closely to faith in God** and depending on Him for ultimate victory.
6. **Happiness can look beyond immediate difficulties** and know that all things work together for good to those who love God and who follow His will (Romans 8:28).
7. **To be happy, one must want to be happy.** Apparently some folks enjoy being sad and lonely and down and out. The world is full of good things and good hopes for those who seek them. If Paul could find peace and hope in the midst of all his sufferings and burdens, surely we can seek it and find it. And one thing that keeps many people from finding it is that they do not realize that it exists mostly in the humble and thankful heart. †

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

“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole” (Job 5:17,18).

“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding” (Proverbs 3:13).

“Happy is the man who is always reverent ...” (Proverbs 28:14)



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Angels

Paula Bates

1. Colossians 1:16 “For by Him were all things _____, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, _____ and _____, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him.”
2. Luke 20: 36 “Neither can they die anymore for they are equal unto the _____. And are the children of God, being the children of the _____.”
3. Psalms 148:1,2 “Praise ye the _____! Praise ye the Lord from the _____ Praise Him in the _____. Praise ye him, all his _____; praise ye him, all his hosts.”
4. 1 Peter 3:22 “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of _____, angels and _____ and powers being made subject unto him.”
5. Hebrews 1:5 “For to which of the _____ did He ever say: ‘You are my _____ Today I have begotten You.’”

Conclusion

Angels are heavenly beings created by _____. They are immortal, they _____ God and they are subject unto _____.

~~Answers~~

1. Created, visible, invisible
2. Angels, resurrection
3. Lord, heavens, heights, angels
4. God, authorities
5. Angels, Son
6. Conclusion: God, worship, Christ

Answers:

Is One as Good as Another?

Wendell Winkler

If you are calling a doctor, is one as good as another? If you are seeking a wife, is one as good as another? If you are buying a prescription, is one as good as another? If you are needing a mechanic, is one as good as the other? Then, kind reader, why be so particular in material things and so careless and “broad minded” in matters pertaining to your eternal destiny? We often hear that “one faith, way, worship, religion, baptism, church, name, or doctrine is as good as another.”

FAITH: Is one faith as good as another faith? If so, then why did the apostles teach, “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism*” (Ephesians 4:5)? Also, a dead faith would be as good as an active one. The Bible speaks of both kinds (James 2:26).

WAY: Is one way as good as another way? If so, why did Jesus say, “*I am the way...*” (John 14:6)? Furthermore, Proverbs 14:12 says, “*There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the*

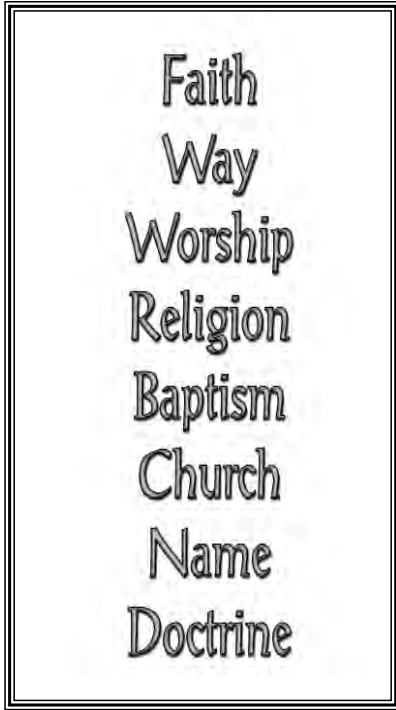
ways of death.” Is this way as good as the strait and narrow that leads to life everlasting (Matthew 7:13,14)?

WORSHIP: Is one worship as good as another worship? If so, then why did God reject Cain’s worship and accept Abel’s act of worshipping (Leviticus 10)? And, if one worship is as good as another one, then ignorant worship (Acts 17:23), a vain worship (Matthew 15), and a will worship (Colossians 2:23) would be as good as true worship (John 4:24).

RELIGION: Is one religion as good as another? If so, why does the book of Acts record thousands of cases of conversion from one religion to another? In fact, almost every conversion in the Book is a conversion of a religious individual. Why make the change if one religion is as good as another? The Bible discusses pure religion, the only kind to have (James 1:27).

BAPTISM: If one baptism is as good as another, then why were those who had been baptized with John’s

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baptism re-baptized in Acts 19? For our baptism to be valid, it must be based upon genuine faith (Mark 16:16), preceded by repentance of sins (Acts 2:38), and administered upon a proper confession (Acts 8:36-38).

CHURCH: Is one church as good as another? If so, then those built and established by man (Matthew 15:13; Psalm 127:1) would be as good as the one established by the Lord (Matthew 16:18). Yet, Matthew 15:13 tells us that every plant the Father has not planted shall be rooted up!

NAME: Is one name as good as another? If so, why did the Lord change some names — as in the cases of Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, etc? Also, why did the Lord teach in Acts 4:12 that there was salvation in no other name than in Jesus' name?

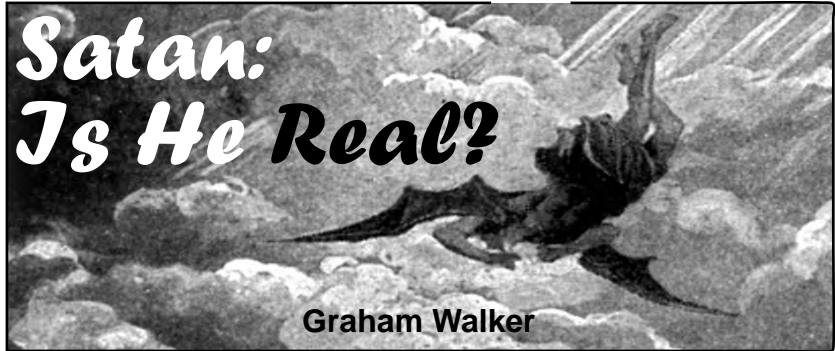
DOCTRINE: If one doctrine is as good as another, then why did John write, "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God*" (2 John 9)?

Surely, we can clearly see that **one is not as good as another!** †

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.

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

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Certainly, if one believes the Word of God is the infallible truth (John 17:17), and that it is truly inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16), then one can categorically say that Satan is real, for it is the Word of God that illuminates his presence. Who is Satan and where did he originate? If he is real, then what should we be aware of?

In the first instance, we are introduced to Satan in the opening chapters of Genesis with an account of deception via the medium of a serpent. The familiar story of craftiness in regard to deceiving Adam and Eve's faith is one of Satan's tried and tested methods of beguiling, even to this present day. Satan is the one from whom all men must be redeemed (Romans 3:21-26) if they wish to spend eternity with God. He is darkness personified, as opposed to Jesus, the personification of light.

In 1 John 1:5, the inspired apostle informs man that God has distanced Himself from Satan, a dark force that owes his very existence to God in the

first instant (Colossians 1:16). Although the holy writ never mentions Satan's beginnings in detail, it is implied from the antecedent that he must have been one of three categories of life forms endowed with intelligence. These are animal, man, and spiritual beings.

Logic determines Satan could not have originated from an animal, as they have not been endowed with an emotional response, nor with speech-making faculties. Too, it could not have originated from a human, for man does not have the ability to inhabit the spiritual realm until he first dies. Besides, Adam was the first man created, and death did not come until Satan had beguiled that first man (Romans 5:12).

That leaves only one other intelligent life form created by God, of which there are at least four categories mentioned that are not of this world: "angels" (Daniel 3:28; Hebrews 13:2); "cherubim" (Genesis 3:24); "seraphim" (Isaiah 6:2); "archangels" (Daniel 9:21; 10:13,21).

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There may be more to His creation that we are not privy to (Deuteronomy 29:29), but one thing is for sure: Satan is real. He cannot be anything but a created being (John 1:1 records there was nothing before the beginning, except God). And as God cannot create anything of a sinful nature (Leviticus 11:45; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:22), we can say with confidence that Satan is either a fallen angel, fallen cherubim, fallen seraphim, or a created being of unknown makeup that at some stage became lawless through free will choice. Second Peter 2:4 states that angels can sin, and in doing so, are subject to eternal punishment, just like humans who fall from the grace of God. To this end, Peter suggests there are many that have fallen prey to sin. As the Bible is silent as to any other possibility, then our assumption for anything else must remain as the Bible is, silent.

The fact that Satan is a reality suggests, in the second instance, that we need to be aware of his ways. They are many and manifest. His wicked triumphs are recorded in every book of the Bible, if not specifically, then most certainly by implication.

Satan's arsenal is simple; he uses that which man has been freely endowed with — that is, the freedom of choice. His methodology is equally as simple, that is to manipulate that choice toward self-credit. His followers number in the billions (Mat-

thew 7:13). His opponents are few and far between (Matthew 7:14).

Non-de-plumes are plaques of his achievements, for instance; “*Abaddon*” (Revelation 9:11); “*Adversary*” (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Kings 11:4; Job 3:3); “*Murderer*” (John 8:44); “*ruler of darkness*” (Ephesians 6:12); and one with which we seem to associate him most, “*serpent*” (Genesis 3:4). Eulogies are reminders of his victories: “*And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Satan has won the hearts of the majority, for he needs only to offer incentives to keep jaded followers in line. Yet, he has not won total victory, for the souls he seeks most are those that have repented from his ways. Therefore, the advice of Peter is all the more poignant: “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8).

He is real, and he is not yet finished. Until the day of judgment, keep yourself holy, separate and apart from his world, and be ever mindful of his ways that are designed to entrap the unwary and weary soul on its sojourn in this life. †

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Tried By Satan

Betty Tucker

Our first glimpse of Job shows a man who was the greatest of all the men of the East. He had it all — health, wealth, family, and prestige. He was a man perfect and upright, and one who hated evil. People who have even a vague knowledge of the Bible know that Job was sorely tempted by the devil.



Satan did not reach down and reveal himself to Job. He sent others to vex the man. The Sabeans rustled his cattle...lightning killed his sheep...the Chaldeans stole his camels! The final blow came when a whirlwind took his ten children. All of these things happened in one day!

How did Job react to these mishaps? In reading Job 1:20,21 we learn that he rent his mantle [tore his outer garment], shaved his head, and fell down and worshipped God. He said, *“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

Into the Depths of Despair

Satan next pleads for another chance to try this man who refused to be beaten. God allows the Master of Darkness to touch Job, but He stipulates that he cannot take his life.

Suddenly, Job finds himself smitten with *“sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.”* Any who have had even one boil know something of the condition of our diminishing hero’s plight.

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He was brought low and sat in the ashes, scraping his oozing sores with a broken piece of pottery. Let us note some passages that record Job's analysis of his hateful condition:

- Job 7:5 — *“My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome.”*
- Job 17:1 — *“My days are extinct, and the grave is ready for me.”*
- Job 19:19 — *“They whom I have loved are turned against me.”*
- Job 19:20 — *“My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.”*
- Job 30:17,18 — *“My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.”*
- Job 30:30 — *“My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.”*

Foolish Advice

Mrs. Job has likewise suffered the losses of her mate. Now, she beholds his pitiful condition, and she allows herself to become an instrument of Satan. Rather than console her husband, she decides that only a quick death can bring relief. Her words are memorable — *“... Curse God and die.”*

After this heartbreaking proclamation, we read nothing more about Mrs. Job. We do not know whether she was partner to Job in his later state of blessings restored.

Job's answer to her heartless suggestion bears testimony to his deep commitment to God. We can only admire this faithful man as he gently chastises his wife, *“Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh”* (Job 2:10).

Job refused to let Satan win over him. He knew that his only hope was to trust Jehovah for deliverance. His deep and abiding faith was justified.

The final chapter of Job's life reveals that *“The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before”* (Job 42:10). He had even more possessions than before, and he once again had seven sons and three daughters. He lived 140 years to bask in the luxury of these great blessings.

Job was tried by fire, tempted on every hand by Satan, and he came forth as gold. He proved, once and for all, that a man can retain his integrity and overcome the wiles of the devil. †

Betty Tucker was a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International* before her death in 2008.

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Abraham and God

Bill Dillon

Among the greatest names in the roll call of faithful saints down through the ages, the name of Abraham must surely rank high on the list. Abraham's distinction lies in the fact that he listened to God, loved God, and leaned upon God.

Abraham Listened to God

In Genesis 22:1, the Lord spoke the patriarch's name and Abraham replied, "*Behold, here I am.*" God proceeded to tell Abraham an awful thing. He does not always speak to us the things we like to hear. Very likely, any other command from the Lord would have been desired instead, but He often calls upon His people for unpleasant tasks.

Abraham Loved God

Abraham's love was so great that when God told him to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice, the faithful servant did as he was asked, without argument, excuse, or delay. Abraham attained the victory of faith over the temptation to disobey what amounted to the hardest test of his life (Genesis 22:2-5).

In anguish of soul, Abraham traveled to the place God designated. The great servant of the Lord erected an altar and put wood for the fire in place, and then he proceeded to stretch forth his hand to slay Isaac. This was no bluff, no pretension. But, the angel of the Lord spoke and stayed the man of faith's hand, and Isaac was spared (Genesis 22:9-11).

Abraham's faith was tried and proven to be solid and strong. Actions do speak louder than words! Instead of Isaac, a ram became the sacrifice (Genesis 22:12,13). God makes a way for those who listen to Him.

Abraham Leaned Upon God

While we want our Father to listen to us when we pray, it is equally important for us to hear Him. If we don't stop and listen, we may never know God's will for our lives. Our faith will go untested, and an untested faith is not worth having.

As Abraham listened, loved, and leaned on God, so we must do the same. Leaning upon the Lord allows Him to do for us all the things we cannot do for ourselves. We need to appreciate a life of living, active, and obedient faith, and the hope such a life gives to us for the world which is to come. †

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The Mother of Jesus

John Gipson

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the favored one. When the angel came to her he said, “*Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!*” In her magnifying of the Lord she said, “*For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed*” (Luke 1:48).

I wonder if we give Mary the respect she deserves. It often seems that we tend to ignore her. While our Catholic friends have overly elevated her, we tend to forget her, or else put her down.

Mary was told that she was favored and that the Lord would be with her. But when you look at her life, you have to consider that the favor of the Lord can be a strange thing to our way of thinking. What sort of favor is it to conceive a child before she is married? She is going to become the talk of the town. And the birth in a manger is not the glamour we picture. Childbirth is no easy matter under the best of circumstances, and under these conditions it would be a real trial. Enjoying God’s favor, she was compelled to flee into Egypt to save the life of her child. She knew of His enemies, His trials, His rejection, and finally she watched as they

nailed Him down and then lifted Him up on a cross between two thieves. Is this the favor of God? Does all of this show that God was with her?

Perhaps we need to learn that God’s favor is not measured by unbroken happiness. Why do we associate divine mercies with pleasures and ease? Often they come with hardship, difficulties, and a cross.

However, it is not because of the difficulties of her life that we should honor Mary. She is to be honored because of her submission to God. See how responsive she is: “*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*” (Luke 1:38). She does not pray, “Thy will be changed,” but “*Thy will be done.*” Mary’s child changed the world because she recognized the will of God and accepted it. I can’t help but reflect upon the fact that it is one thing to be religious, but obedience goes far beyond that. God’s favor sometimes pushes us where we do not want to go. What a mother was Mary! †

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Samuel — He Answered God’s Call

Dan R. Owen

Samuel was a powerful spiritual leader in an age of spiritual poverty, because he answered the call of God in his life. He was sincere, prayerful, focused on God’s law, and open to do whatever the Lord wanted him to do. Because of this, God used Samuel as the greatest leader of his time.

Samuel received his name because “*God heard*” the cries of his mother when she asked for a son. From the moment of his birth, his mother dedicated him to the service of God and pointed him in that direction. While being raised in the house of Eli the priest, Samuel lived in a contradictory environment of good and evil. Still, he grew in his relationship with God and was ready to hear God in his life.



When God called the boy Samuel one night in the tabernacle, he thought it was the voice of the grandfatherly priest. When they realized God was calling the boy, Samuel said, “*Speak, for your servant is listening!*” Too often when God calls one of us, we are not ready to listen. Through our study of the Word, our prayer life, our conversations with spiritual leaders, and our confrontations with God in worship, he calls to the hearts of those who sincerely want to serve Him. Instead of “*Speak, Lord, your servant is listening*”, we often say, “Not now, Lord, your servant is too busy,” or “Your servant is not talented enough”,

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or “Your servant is not ready for that level of commitment.” But Samuel answered God’s call and made himself available for the Master’s use.

When God called the boy Samuel one night in the tabernacle, he thought it was the voice of the grandfatherly priest. When they realized God was calling the boy, Samuel said, “*Speak, for your servant is listening!*” **Too often when God calls one of us, we are not ready to listen.**

As a prophet, a judge, and a faithful priest, Samuel had a long and influential career. Since he always told the Israelites God’s truth, never took bribes, and never perverted justice, people came to trust him and respect him as a genuine spiritual leader. When he was old, and they saw that his sons were not like him, the people asked for a king. This hurt Samuel’s feelings, but God granted the people’s request and gave Samuel a new opportunity to answer God’s call. Now, he was called to be a mentor, an encourager, and a teacher to the leaders of Israel.

Though they were not excited about Saul, Samuel promoted him among the people. He taught the new king about God’s will and tried to lead him in the right way. Saul’s disobedience and rebellion broke Samuel’s heart because he truly wanted Saul to succeed, but God called Samuel to nurture another king. He anointed young David, the son of Jesse, the man after God’s own heart. In David’s darkest hour, when his life was in danger, he resorted to Samuel. When Saul had nowhere else to turn, after Samuel’s death, he even conjured up the spirit of Samuel to get his advice. There is no way to measure the power of the influence of Samuel, a man who sincerely answered the call of God. Behind Israel’s brightest hour as a conquering kingdom and behind the deep spirituality of the sweet psalmist of Israel lies the influence of Samuel! When he died, all Israel gathered to mourn his death. †

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Choices

Alex Gibson

For this thrilling installment, I want to go to a deeper part of theology, that being the domain of *will* and its effect on love and hate. A lot of people will ask questions about the concept of free will and what it has to do with God. They would ask, “If God knows everything and can do anything, do we even have free will at all?”

I will start by answering that question. Yes, we do have free will, the ability to pick and choose between things, to commit to and to deny things in life. But why and how? Well, it’s simple. If I knew every move you were going to make in a game of chess, and could even control your moves, wouldn’t that mean I could do anything I wanted to do as well? And if I played that way, I could win every time, just because I knew your moves and could control them. Now, that would be the same as God knowing what we will do, say, or think well before we do it, and then changing my decisions in any way He saw fit.

But that doesn’t help develop the person as a chess player or as a child of God. You see people can be *guided* but not *manipulated* by good. The reason is simple. God wants us to *choose* Him. That’s what gives meaning to our relationship and what allows us to grow. The act of choice allows us to accept our position with God and to remain there and be happy. To put it another way, I didn’t go to school by choice, and, to be honest, I had very little interest in school and found most days painfully dull. On the other hand, I joined the Army by choice, and I still have great interest in it, even though many of the days have been very painful, physically, to say the least. But why am I happier with the Army, that causes me heart, head, and back aches, than I was in school that was very relaxing? The answer is, I put myself in the Army *by choice*, but school was *forced*.



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God works the same way. When we make a choice to be with Him and to take Him as our Father, it is not forced, but is then free to have meaning in our lives. He urges in Hebrews 4:7, “*Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.*”

This is a choice that God will try to bring you to, but that you must make yourself, so that you own it. That’s the way of things. God may know what you are going to do, but He lets you go on your own until you want Him there with you. From personal experience, it’s a darker place when you don’t have Him there. “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Psalm 119:105) are very true words indeed, because without choosing to take that lamp, you are left with the darkness you asked for.

So, let’s say you don’t choose to take up God. You reject His love, or you don’t want it on His terms. Well, that is a choice you can make, too. But that choice is to take darkness over light. And, having been there, I will tell you some of the things you will find, stumbling in the dark. First of all, you will find that life is missing an element that you won’t be able to put your finger on. Christ says He has come to give us life to the full (John 10:10), and so if you do not choose Him you will not have life to its fullest. You will find that you no longer have any defense, spiritually. The armor of God is powerful stuff, but without God being there to issue you that armor, you won’t have it to wear, now will you? This means you will be an easier target for attacks from things like depression, sexual immorality, materialism, greed, anger, and a slew of other spiritual weapons.

And those *are* weapons, to be sure. They are arrows that pierce the heart and leave wounds that take a great deal of time to heal, alone, but often those arrows have poison that eats away at other parts of your life as well. Anger may spill from work to a loved one. Greed may cause you to snub friends, and the sex drive gone wrong has ruined many lives.

The thing to remember about choosing darkness is you have turned your back on the light and life of Christ. So with no light you will stumble, and with no life you will eventually die. Darkness is where evil dwells, and as a rule evil is destructive in nature. It seeks to isolate you and break you down so there is no help and no hope. It seeks to crush you spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Look at people who suffer from addiction, who have poor ties with family, who are consumed by work alone, who are looking for something but never finding it. These are people who are lost in darkness, and they are there by choice. That’s the sweet irony about it. *They put themselves there by choice* and so when they look up and realize their plight, they have only themselves to blame.

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All of us have the power of choice and free will that God has given us. And it is an awesome power. But there is this comfort, that God promises us that He will be there for us (Hebrews 13:5,6), and will lift us out of our darkest places *if we choose to let Him*. I've been there, being lost and alone and looking up and begging for light. And God does not fail. He can and will lift you out if you let Him. It is my plea that you be on guard against letting your choices take you away from God.

Small choices are easy to make on your own, but those are the majority of your choices, and the more practice you have at not involving God in your decisions, the easier it becomes to leave Him out altogether.

Spiritual awareness of your choices will keep you from straying and help you to grow stronger in God. It's by choice that we grow stronger or weaker. So, I ask that no matter where you are in your walk, or no matter how dark your world may seem around you, *choose God* because He already chose you in giving His Son for your salvation. If you choose Him, He promises not to leave you alone, and to help you by the strengthening of His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:14-17). It is a much better world in the light, and I pray that you will give more weight to your choices as you move on in life.

I know this article has been a bit heavier than my other ones, but hey, everyone needs a good heavy lesson now and then, right? As usual if you have any questions or comments feel free to email me at zex1@hotmail.com. God bless. †

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Love:

Earthly Pleasures or Spiritual Treasures

Ashley L. Bates

What exactly is love? Is it the actions and feelings we all have as Christians described in 1 Corinthians 13? Is it the way that is right and the tender care we aim towards giving to others? Many ask if love really does exist in the world today, and my answer is yes. We are given examples of love throughout the entire Bible, and we are given a commandment that involves the greatest love one could have. Our greatest commandment is to love thy Lord with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength as referenced in Matthew 22:37.

In today's world, most people have an easy time having love for worldly things, but a hard time having love for spiritual things. As kids, teenagers, and young adults, we love to spend time with our family and friends. We love to play sports and video games, watch movies, and be involved in whatever makes us happy at the moment. We grow up learning all about love: what it is, why we need it, and what we love. In all this learning, there is negligence in teaching the real focus we should have concerning loving.

Why is it that we can learn to love

those that are good to us, yet hate those that don't give us what we want when we want it? Matthew 5:43,44 states that we have been told to "*love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you...*" Why is it that we can learn to love what we are unsure we will ever be the best at, but we can't learn to love the things God blessed us to be able to do? Why do we not have a love for all the lost souls around us? I, myself, find these shortcomings throughout my everyday walk in life. We are not expected to be perfect, but why is it so hard for us to take what is given to us in plain black and white?

As a society as a whole, our focus in life has changed. We have become too involved in keeping up with our "friends" and wanting to be like those who have more than we have. We want to have the best, be the best, and look the best of all those around us. We are teaching the younger Christians in the world that the souls of the unsaved no longer come first in our daily walk. We are not teaching by our lives that our most important priority is to "Go

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therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." as instructed in Matthew 28:18-20. Is this the example we want to set for the younger generations, the life we wish to live? No matter how young or old we may be as Christians, by our behavior we are teaching all of those around us, both Christians and non-Christians. Are we really losing focus on the priority of the Bible as our model in life? Yet again in Mark 16:15,16 and throughout the New Testament, we are instructed to teach all nations.

But before we are able to teach, we must have the love in our hearts for those around us. Are we really more interested in earthly happiness than heeding the warnings we have been given? Psalm 97:10 says "*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil...*" Think of all the loved ones you know who have passed from this life. Did they take anything with them besides their souls? No, we are not going to be able to drive that new special edition vehicle to the gates of heaven. We are not going to be able to take with us any of the earthly titles such as Best Football player or Valedictorian of our high school class. If we are more wound up in earthly pleasures, and lack the true love of God, are we really going to care and be the good Christian ex-

amples that sets us apart from those around us?

Love can be considered the basis of all knowledge and life. Being a Christian, I have had to adjust friendships without destroying the ground to try and teach. I now walk in the light of the truth; the Word of God is my pathway, not in the darkness of the world. I have had to learn a new type of love for those around me that I hold close to my heart. It is the love of God and His only Son, Jesus Christ, that keeps us out of sin and death. In 1 John 4:16 it says, "*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*"

Our biggest goal in life should be to be the best Christian example possible to those around us, whether it be friends, family, or just people we go to school with. No matter how young we are, we can be the pattern that helps someone to see the light and the truth of God's Word. Who would be ashamed to share the wonderful love of the Father that we have found with our friends and family?

May God bless each and all of you. †

Ashley Bates was brought to Christ through the efforts of Gene and Madolyn Gibson at the Student Center at Mississippi Delta Community College in Morehead, MS, USA.

The Promised Kingdom (Church) Would Never Be Destroyed

J.C. Choate

Daniel prophesied that the Lord would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). Many other prophecies were made to indicate where and when it would be established (Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28,29).

John the Baptist came preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:1,2) and Christ said that the kingdom would come with power in the lifetime of some of those who were present as He was speaking (Mark 9:1). Christ also asked His disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matthew 6:10).

After the apostles had confessed Christ to be the Son of God, the Lord responded by saying that He would build His church or kingdom on that rock, that truth (Matthew 16:18,19). Later, we have the Hebrews writer saying that we have received that kingdom (Hebrews 12:28). Paul said to the Christians at Colossee — and he included himself — that the Father had delivered them from darkness and had translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13,14).

But when was the kingdom or the church established?

After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, Christ appeared to the apostles, *“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”* (Luke 24:46-49).

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said to the Apostles just before He returned to the Father in heaven, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

When we turn to Acts 2, we have the fulfillment of those prophecies and promises concerning the establishment of the kingdom or church. The apostles were in

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Jerusalem and it was the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pentecost was a Jewish feast day which would bring Jews from all over the world. The Lord chose this occasion to be the birthday of the church so that from this very first day on which the Gospel was preached, it would begin to go into all the world.

Thus it was that the stage was set, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, with the multitudes gathered together. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles and, as evidence of this, they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. They preached the Gospel of Christ to the masses that were gathered there and, as a result, many who heard believed and wanted to know what they should do to be forgiven. They were told to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord for the remission of their sins and that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The record goes on to say that those who gladly received the Word were baptized. That day around 3,000 were added to the church (Acts 2:41), and the Lord continued to add to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

That church or kingdom has been in existence since that time. We read, *“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end”* (Luke 1:33).

You may read of the church throughout the book of Acts and in the epistles or letters that followed.

Paul warned, however, that there would be a falling away or an apostasy on the part of many Christians and congregations. The Spirit directed him to write, *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”* (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Paul also spoke of a falling away in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

God’s plan for the church was that there were to be elders and deacons over each congregation which had qualified men to serve (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1), and that each congregation was to be autonomous or self governing. In this way, even though some congregations might fall away, the one or ones that remained faithful to God could continue to represent Him.

After its establishment, the church grew and spread throughout the world. Church history tells us that the apostasy came about through unauthorized and unscriptural church organization. In time, elders in some congregations usurped authority and began to be rec-

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ognized as the chief elders over those congregations. Eventually, this led to one man being recognized over all the congregations in his area. Out of this came the Catholic Church, with Boniface the Third being recognized as the “Universal Bishop” in 606 A.D. Later the Catholic church divided into the Roman and Greek branches that continue to this day.

In the 1500’s, Martin Luther led the Reformation Movement, which attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church. This effort was not successful, but it did lead to the Protestant Movement which resulted in all of the denominational churches with which we are familiar today.

In the 1700’s and 1800’s, there arose numerous denominational people in Europe and America who advocated that we not be Protestants or Catholics, but that we go back to the Bible and be Christians only, members of the church that Christ built. This was known as the Restoration Movement, an attempt to restore pure New Testament Christianity in Europe and America.

Even though it was called the restoration movement, that did not mean the true church had gone out of existence, that it did not exist somewhere in the world. It just meant that those individuals in America as well as in Europe (or any other place in the world where there were those who wanted to be Christians

only and members of the one church of the Bible), were trying to restore the original church for themselves. There have been many such groups found in recent times who had done that or were trying to do that, and even in the future, anytime, anywhere there are those who are willing to return to the Bible and follow the New Testament pattern of Christianity, they become the Lord’s people, members of His one church.

Because the majority of the church did fall away in the first three centuries of its existence, they were the ones who received most of the historical attention. The same has been true with the so-called Christian world right on up to this day. But the faithful few are always there, and always have been, will always be. Even though the world as a whole ignored those who remained faithful, and much of their story became lost from the history records, still they were there.

Just as the prophecies and promises stated, the true church of our Lord will not be destroyed, and it will continue as His voice in the world, even until He returns. The Holy Spirit directed Paul to say that when Jesus comes at the sound of the last trumpet, there will be faithful Christians alive who will be caught up in the clouds to meet Him (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

So, we can be sure that the Lord’s kingdom, His church, once established, would stand forever. There has never been a time when the Lord

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did not have someone on earth to represent Him. We know this, because it was the balance of good and evil being overseen that brought about the destruction of the world in the time of Noah. If God's people — the church — had ceased to exist and to permeate the world to some degree with righteousness, the world would of necessity have been destroyed. But the prophecy that there will be Christians living when Jesus returns is God's own promise, again, that the church will never die.

It has not only existed in promise, through the written word, but in reality. Neither was it established, eventually to go out of literal existence and to exist only in the Word, which is called *the seed* of the kingdom; this evasive explanation won't work because the "seed" is words in a Book, but the "kingdom" is people.

No, if God is to be believed at all, He must be believed fully. We must accept Jesus' word that, though individual Christians and congregations here and there in the world might prove faithful or unfaithful, the church itself would continue as His representation on earth until it is finally delivered up to the Father, where it will exist eternally.

Neither will the Lord come back one day to establish it as a literal kingdom, over which He will reign victoriously for 1,000 years. The promised church, the spiritual kingdom which

Christ came to establish, already exists, and will exist forever.

Are you a member of the church of Christ? If not, our prayer is that you will want to become a member of it. Only in the Lord's church, and as a faithful Christian until you die, can you expect to be eternally saved as a part of that kingdom. †

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

THE FIRST SERMON

Though 12 apostles apparently preached on the birthday of the church, only the sermon of the apostle Peter was recorded in Acts 2. This sermon was preached by inspiration through the baptism of the Holy Spirit on this occasion, and it was recorded by inspiration at the hand of Luke.

The apostle Peter identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ or the Messiah. Then, the apostle proceeded to acquaint the multitude in attendance with their sins, chief of which being the crucifixion of the Savior.

In Acts 2:38, Peter pronounced the remedy for mankind's sin problem. That first sermon still announces that remedy for mankind's sin problem. †



BIBLE FIND

Husbands and Wives

Bonnie Rushmore

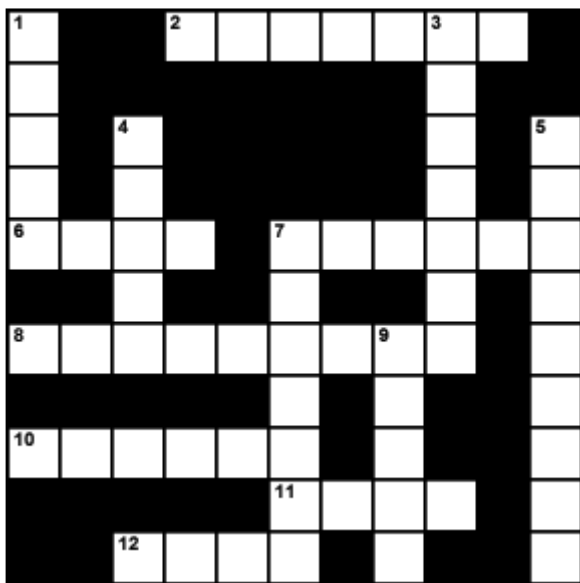
Match the husband with his wife

Across

2. Hannah (1 Sam 1:2) 6. Ruth (Ruth 4:13)
 7. Priscilla (Acts 18:2) 8. Elizabeth (Luke 1:5)
 10. Mary (Matthew 1) 11. Jezebel (1 Kings 16:30,31)
 12. Eve
 (Genesis 3:20)

Down

1. Rachel
 (Genesis 29:28)
 3. Sapphira
 (Acts 5:1)
 4. Rebekah
 (Genesis 24:67)
 5. Vashti
 (Esther 1:1-9)
 7. Sarah
 (Genesis 17:15)
 9. Jochebed
 (Exodus 6:20)



The Way It Used to Be

Don Adkins

Time was that the Bible was taught at home and not left up to the local church to do it. We have moved away from the values that once used to be a part of our fabric. Young Timothy had a dedicated mother and grandmother to train him at home. Where the father and grandfather were, we don't know.

God told Israel that *"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise"* (Deuteronomy 6:7). Today we would be considered fanatics to be this involved in Bible commands. Besides, we think we don't have time to do it anyway.

When I was a young boy in the 50's, the preacher would have a class up front on Sunday evenings before anything else happened. It wasn't long before this was stopped. The mothers insisted that this sort of thing must end. The reason was quite obvious: their children weren't prepared to answer his questions. The change in our society's structure offered mom a job away from home, and Bible training suffered. Where was dad, you should say? The extra income had undermined his authority in the home.

We can't undo the past, and we surely should not live in it. Still there are things we can learn from our past mistakes. While we are a great way off from the desired training we need, there is still hope. In some small way, a local congregation can make strides toward the training of its youth. It may be small at first, but it can grow to give great dividends. Zechariah was told to tell the people coming back from the captivity: *"For who has despised the day of small things"* (Zechariah 4:10). A training class up front on Sunday evenings can go a long way to restoring our youth for service in the kingdom of God.

In the congregation here at Center Ridge, we have restored the class up front, and already our young people are showing evidence of good growth. In time, nearly all have been baptized and are taking their place in God's service. Parents are once again proud to hear their children speak up and answer Bible questions. The youngsters are prepared and look forward to the drills and questions. May God be glorified in our efforts to serve Him better. †

Don Adkins works with the church of Christ in Cedar Ridge, Arkansas, where an exemplary group of young people are being trained to serve God.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Note by Betty B. Choate: It was both interesting and inspiring to watch the Cedar Ridge class in progress. This was not a “rah-rah” class to generate a mood of being entertained. It was serious business, dealt with seriously. One of the men of the congregation led it. The young people — teenagers, in this case — sat together on the front rows. They were dressed as with respect for the fact that they were worshiping God; they were attentive, and all participated in the exercises. The leader of the class asked a number of questions, to which the group responded with interest and enthusiasm. Drill questions such as these form the basis for the classes:

(Pertaining to salvation)

1. Who died for us? Scripture?
2. How are our sins forgiven? Scripture?
3. What must we believe in order to be saved? Scripture?
4. What must we do in order to be saved? Scripture?
5. How are we buried with Christ? Scripture?
6. Can a saved person be lost? Scripture?

(Pertaining to Christianity and the church)

1. By what name were believers in the first century called? Scripture?
2. What is the church? Scripture?
3. To whom does the church belong? Scripture?

(Pertaining to worship)

1. Christians must worship in _____ and in _____. Scripture? What does this mean?
 2. What did the early church do in worship? Scriptures for each part of worship.
 3. Why is the Lord's Supper important? Scripture?
 4. On which day did early Christians worship? Scripture?
- Surprisingly, the questions also included application, such as this:

(Pertaining to outreach)

1. Who has invited a friend to worship or Bible class this week?
2. Who has studied with a friend or family member?
3. Who has done some work to help someone?
4. Who has prayed for opportunities to share the Gospel with someone?

Could a training class such as this help to equip the young people (and the listening parents) to obey Jesus' command to take the Gospel to the world? †

INTRODUCTION TO SOUL-SAVING

Clayton Pepper

Discussion and background material: Acts 5:42; 20:20; 10:23;24-48; 16:26-33. A verse to remember: “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to preach and teach Jesus Christ*” (Acts 5:42).

INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR TRAINING

We live in a day of specialization. Industry knows the value of training its personnel. The process of education and training never ceases in the secular realm. Just as one must be skilled in the secular realm to be the most effective and do the most important jobs, Christians, too, must be skilled spiritually to be effective at the most important job in the world, saving souls. “*When for the time ye ought to be teachers ...*” (Hebrews 5:12). It is obvious that the normal process of growth should lead every Christian to be a teacher of others. This necessitates training for all Christians. Just as the urgent need today is for soul winners, the need for a change in curriculum is equally urgent, as most of the lessons in the past have not produced a working knowledge of the Bible. Therefore the church is faced with a preacher, teacher and soul winner shortage. If the future is to be better than the past, then the spiritual diet that we receive must be designed to produce the kind of Christians God wants us to be, for we *are* what we are *taught* to be.

The fact that many Christians have been noted for making rash and unkind statements to the lost, thus closing their mind and heart, is evidence of the church’s failure to train every Christian for this important task with which God has charged him.

THE TRAINING CLASS

Since God would have all of us to be teachers and go into our own personal world and declare the soul-saving message of the Gospel, it is necessary that all be equipped for the job. This means that training a few in the congregation for the task can never accomplish what God intended. Soul-saving is the mission of the church, and Christians make up the church, so it becomes important for every Christian to be taught a working knowledge of the Bible.

One of the major mistakes of many soul-saving programs is that little or no

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

training has been offered. We have studied the Bible, lo, these many years, and have acquired more of a theoretical knowledge than a working knowledge. The working knowledge referred to is that of knowing where to begin in the Bible to teach a lost soul and how to end with success. Isn't it time that we spent the necessary hours and effort to acquire a working knowledge of the Scripture?

A group of thirty men and women who followed this plan won over 225 to Christ in three years. If thirty can do this, just imagine what could happen if *everyone* were trained and directed to save souls. If a soul-saving program is to be permanent and consistent, it must be realized that preparation for, and motivation to, the task is unending. Workers never outgrow their need for training and encouragement.

THE WORKING PROGRAM

In teaching a theoretical knowledge of the Bible, the need for a working program is hardly realized. But a working knowledge of the Bible magnifies the uselessness of a study program without a working program to run parallel with it, in which one puts into practice what he learns. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for "*saying and doing not*" (Luke 6:46).

(1) Set aside one night per week when the most people are available to work to save souls. Some choose to have a meal together and then go out and work. It may be necessary to have more than one work night because of those who are not available on the night designated. Place one person in charge for each night.

(2) Have a 15 minute devotional before going out to work.

(3) In most instances, it is best to time yourself so as to arrive by 7:30 p.m. when conducting a home Bible study.

(4) The women may have an organized program in the daytime when someone keeps the children at the church building, possibly after a ladies' Bible class.

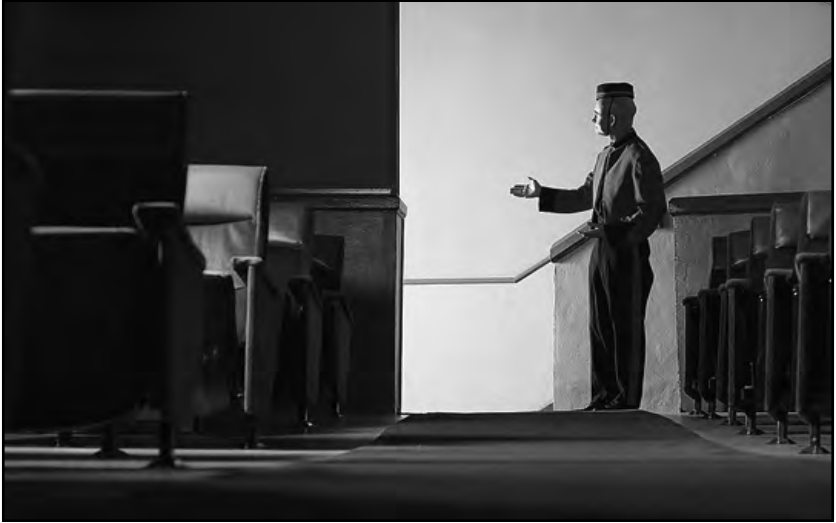
(5) Classes should be arranged at the building for children while parents visit.

There is work for everyone within the scope of their ability. Newcomers, absentees, erring members, and the sick need to be visited; home Bible studies should be conducted whenever possible.

The successful soul-winner is a prepared one. A lack of success usually stems from a lack of preparation. One thought gotten from some writer may be just the one that will cause some person to become a Christian. †

Clayton Pepper wrote and lectured extensively on Church Growth before his death.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



NOW PLAYING AT A THEATER NEAR YOU — AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH THE GOSPEL

Tye Power

In Acts 17, we read that Paul's spirit was provoked within him as he walked about in a city full of idols. He preached to Greeks in Athens, the center of ancient philosophy, using their statues and poems as a platform for introducing the Gospel.

Today, Hollywood is the center of modern philosophy. Movies influence American popular culture more than the Bible. Not sure about that? Ask a few (especially younger) people to describe a few Bible stories. Then ask them to describe a few scenes from a movie. Which topic makes their eyes light up?

Recently, the massively popular movie *Avatar* was released. It has made over two billion dollars worldwide. A visually stunning film that captivates viewers by transporting them to a new world full of new creatures, it is as much a sermon as a cinematic spectacle. The not-so-subtle message warns against harming native cultures and the natural world for the purpose of profit. This is

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

fine to a point, but Avatar goes far beyond that point. The presentation of a female deity, coupled with the elevation of the natural world to pantheistic status caused one reviewer to write, “the creator and *her* creation are indistinguishable.” Add to this an unhealthy dose of profanity, violence, and sexuality, and you have a movie that ought to provoke the spirit within a Christian.

How should Christians respond to this or a current movie that might be popular? **Biblically?**

Consider Romans 12:2, “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” From this passage, we learn that our minds should be above the shifting sands of what is popular. A mind transformed by God’s Word allows us to test whatever the world presents to us and exercise discernment in living out God’s will.

To do this, we should avoid the extremes of human wisdom. On one extreme, we might ignore popular movies, and thereby miss an opportunity to discuss spiritual matters. (Paul couldn’t ignore those idols he found in Athens!) On the other extreme, we would be wrong to embrace movies like *Avatar* wholeheartedly, checking our brains at the theater door, justifying our actions by such statements as, “Come on, it’s only a movie!”

Instead of ignoring or embracing the false ideas that most movies communicate, we can regard their popularity as an open a door for the Gospel. Take the initiative. If people won’t talk about the Bible, surely they will talk about a movie.

In conversation you might ask a friend, “Have you heard of this movie? What do you think about it? Is that like our world today?” You could bring up a kernel of truth and turn it into a leading question. For example, “It is true that we tend to make a mess of the world and mistreat people who get in our way, but God provided a way to deal with that problem. Would you like to know more about that?”

Brothers and sisters, instead of being conformed to this world as Christian *cash cows* that Hollywood can milk for its greedy purposes, we should be transformed by the renewal of our minds as we live out God’s Word and see this or any element of popular culture as an opportunity to introduce the Gospel.

The things in Athens provoked Paul’s spirit within him. Do the things of Hollywood provoke our spirits within us? †

Tye Power is the pulpit minister of the Broadway Church of Christ in Tyler, Texas, USA.

The Kingdom of God and the Things which Concern the Lord Jesus Christ

Sunny David



In the last chapter of the book of Acts and in its last verse, we read that the apostle Paul was “*preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 28:31). Paul was held a prisoner in Rome, but he was permitted to dwell in a rented house with the soldiers guarding him. He was also permitted to receive and meet people in his house. The apostle used this opportunity to preach to people about the kingdom of God and about the things which concern Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, these two things must have been very important in the life of Paul. He stayed in Rome for almost two years, as the record says, and preached the same things over and over again to all those who came to him.

THE CHURCH

Concerning the kingdom of God, amongst other things, Paul must have told his listeners what the prophet Daniel had said, in Daniel 2:44, that the God of heaven promised to set up a kingdom, and that it shall stand forever; and that later Christ confirmed to the apostles that the kingdom would be established in their lifetime on earth (Mark 9:1); that the kingdom of heaven was His church which He was going to establish (Matthew 16:18,19); that to this spiritual kingdom the Lord adds those whom He saves (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13,14); and then when the end comes, He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24-38). To enter the kingdom of God, Paul must have told them that one must be born again, because the King and the Savior had said, "*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3-5).

Further, in teaching about the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle must have told his audience the most wonderful story of the miraculous birth of the Son of God (Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1,14). Surely, he must have taught them about the sinless life of Christ on earth, that although He was tempted in every way just as we are, yet He committed no sin (Hebrews 4:15). Too, he would have told them of the wonderful works He had performed and the powerful lessons He had taught. He must have also told them of His propitiatory death for sinners, how He was buried, and was resurrected after three days, and that before going back to heaven He told His disciples to go into all the world and preach His Gospel to every person (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and that he who will believe and will be baptized shall be saved (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). No doubt, the apostle, lastly, must have also told them how Christ will come back on the last day, on the day of the judgment, when He will judge all people of all nations according to His Word (Acts 17:30,31; John 12:48); that on that day of the Lord all will be made alive by His glorious power, and those who have followed His will on earth shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air, and thus they will always be with Him in His heavenly kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Of course, Paul, ever since he had become a Christian, had dedicated his entire life to the preaching of the kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, because he believed that God's kingdom is the most wonderful place, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way by which one can enter that heavenly place (Philippians 3:7-14; John 14:6). †

Sunny David is a preacher of the Gospel, and the Hindi radio speaker, living and working in New Delhi, India.

Some Things Are Greater than Sacrifice

Cecil May Jr.

“Sacrifice” stands for the ceremonies and ritual of prescribed worship. The Bible says two things are greater than sacrifice. This does not mean regular worship forms are unimportant. It does remind us that other things are even more important.

Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

King Saul was commanded by God to utterly destroy the Amalekites, every man, woman, and child, and all their stock and herds. He went to battle, and with the help of God, prevailed. But he saved King Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle alive. When Samuel challenged him for not obeying the voice of the Lord, Saul made excuse.

And Saul said, *“The people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gial.”*

Then Samuel said, *“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:20-22).

Offering sacrifice was itself a command of God. The people of Israel could not obey God without it. But to disobey God in other matters in order to worship was not acceptable. Performing even correct rituals of worship does not excuse a life lived in disobedience.



Mercy is Better than Sacrifice

Hosea spoke to the faithless people of Israel and Judah. They assembled,

WORSHIP

and they participated in prescribed worship, some even as priests, but they were robbers and murderers who committed horrible crimes against their fellow countrymen. To them God said, *“I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”* (Hosea 6:6).

Twice Jesus cited this word of Hosea. When the Pharisees objected to the time He spent with sinners (Matthew 9:13), and when He broke their traditions by gleaning grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:7), Jesus said if they understood this saying, they would understand what He was about.

Micah made the same point in his prophesy, *“With what shall I come before the*



Lord? With burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil?” No, that is not what God desires. *“He has shown you, O man what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God”* (Micah 6:6-8)?

To translate that into our terms: It is important to assemble, pray, and take the Lord’s supper on the Lord’s day. But it is even more important to love our neighbor, to seek to serve the Lord in humble obedience, to treat others as we want to be treated, and to minister to those in need.

Regular worship, even according to the commandments of God, does not substitute for doing God’s will in everyday life, nor does it allow for unmerciful treatment or exploitation of others. †

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



Some Reasons for Observing the Lord's Supper

Ardron Hinton

1. Jesus specified it as one of the activities in His kingdom. His kingdom came with power on the next Day of Pentecost.
2. He requested no statues or temples as His memorials, but instead requested a memorial act that is based in the heart.
3. Our remembrance of His sacrifice was not to be dependent on human artistic talents. Each person was to create his own scene in his heart. For example, a view of Calvary should be inside the person, not before his eyes. When predicting the New Covenant, He said it would be for the heart.
4. Neither Jesus nor His Spirit-guided spokesmen authorized earth shrines. Instead of focusing on an earthly place, focus is on a spiritual activity that can be done by ordinary people anywhere. By this simple act, believers around the world stand together on common ground. This is hindered by adding human ritual and requirements. As Jesus instituted it, the Lord's Supper is simple, and it can be observed by ordinary people meeting in a house or under a tree.
5. By a regular observance of the Lord's Supper, we tell the world we have not forgotten what Jesus did for us. It unites the first coming of Jesus with the second.
6. The Lord's Supper is to be observed to keep Christ's death on our minds. We must not forget what He endured for us. What better way to begin the week than with a simple observance to refresh our memories regarding His love for me. Neglecting the Lord's Supper, or the heart not being in it, leads to spiritual sickness. †

Ardron Hinton works with the church of Christ in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

WORSHIP

ON WORSHIP

Dalton Key

David was happy to hear the words, “*Let us go into the house of the Lord*” (Psalms 122:1). The apostle Paul tarried in Troas seven days, until the Lord’s Day, when he could come together with the disciples “*to break bread*” — to worship (Acts 20:6,7). Earlier, in Philippi, Paul and Silas, finding themselves in prison, made good use of their time as they “*...prayed, and sang praises unto God...*” (Acts 16:25). The spirits of the righteous have always been made stronger through pure and proper worship.

And yet, there is more to worship than what we get out of it. Yes, the blessings we receive from worship are not by any means the purpose of worship. The wonderful benefits of renewal, hope, strength — these are not to be confused with the rightful purpose, the moving motivation behind our worship. Worship has as its central, fundamental purpose the praise, adoration, and glorification of God. Worship is directed, first, foremost, and always, to God.

The moment we take our eyes off heaven, problems begin to emerge. Neglecting God as the sole object of worship, we’ve begun worshipping self — even in our own assemblies. We hear more about “feeling good about ourselves” than about pleasing the Father in heaven. We’ve come to exchange reverence for entertainment. We aren’t nearly so concerned with magnifying God as we are with “feeling good” when we leave the building. Worship is judged as a success or failure depending only on how we “feel” as we depart the assembly. The prayers, the songs, the sermon are all critiqued for nothing more than their entertainment appeal.

In many churches, hand clapping has become the rule. After all, a good performance deserves a round of applause, doesn’t it? Truth is forgotten and God is forsaken. “*Decency and order*” are words acceptable for Paul’s day, but not for ours. We will be entertained! Now, really, who are we worshipping — God, or self?

Yes, we’ve overstated the case. At least we hope the foregoing is an overstatement. And, yes, we should be joyful in our worship. We should leave uplifted. Yet, when these benefits are mistaken for our **purpose** for worshipping, we soon find ourselves neck deep in the mire of apostasy. Our worship must be tested first, not by its crowd appeal, not by its entertainment value, not by its excitement, but rather by its acceptance of God. †

Dalton Key is the Editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the 10th and Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

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. I am "of the daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1:5).
2. My husband and I "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).
3. I had a child in my old age (Luke 1:7,24,57).
4. An angel appeared to my husband while he burned incense in the temple (Luke 1:9-11).
5. My husband questioned the message the angel brought, so he was unable to speak until after our son was born (Luke 1:18-20).
6. My son prepared the way for Jesus (Luke 1:17).
7. I was the first one to call Mary the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:41-43).
8. I am related to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36).
9. My husband's name is Zacharias (Luke 1:5).
10. The angel told my husband to name our son John, so we did (Luke 1:13,59-63).

See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

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1. Paul visited me for the first time on his second missionary journey; he stayed 18 months (Acts 18:1,11).
2. Paul later stayed with me for three months (Acts 20:2,3).
3. I was a center of commerce in the New Testament world.
4. My people were known for their immorality.
5. Cenchrea is an eastern port for me.
6. During Paul's time, I served as the seat of the deputy of Achaia (Acts 18:12).
7. The Jews became angry with Paul and attempted to have him tried before Gallio at the judgment seat (Acts 18:12-16).
8. I sit on the isthmus connecting central Greece to the Peloponnesus.
9. Aquila and Pricilla made their home with me when they left Rome (Acts 18:2).
10. Paul wrote two letters to the church here (1 and 2 Corinthians).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____



Locked Up In Body But Not In Spirit!

Response to the Gospel of Christ appears to be much greater in recent years on foreign fields than in most westernized countries. Personally, I attribute that increased reluctance in developed nations to consider God's Word more seriously generally to materialism and its companion, hedonism. While westerners essentially often place their hope in this present life — preoccupied with favorite television programming, the newest video games, sports, and generally living the good life, the poorest inhabitants of the world typically have little hope that their lives will ever be substantially better — subsequently often more readily placing their hope in the spiritual and eternal realm. That contrast may explain why in the United States of America it appears that the most responsive segment of our population to the Gospel of Christ are inmates in our prisons. Like precious souls abroad who obey the Gospel of Christ, prisoners many times recognize the hope-

FROM THE HEART OF...

lessness of their current predicaments and more readily grasp for the spiritual and eternal hope afforded them in God's Word. Following are several short articles from just a few of the brethren who are experiencing some success in taking the Gospel behind the walls of incarceration. ~ Louis Rushmore, Associate Editor

Hardeman County and Whiteville Correctional Facilities

Jim Macy

I want to be active in the Lord's kingdom. I want to be useful to Jesus. These are thoughts of a Christian wanting to serve the Lord. I found that service teaching the Bible in a prison.

In 1997, I volunteered to teach the Bible, on the second Sunday every month, to inmates at the Hardeman County Correctional Facility, that houses about two thousand prisoners. H.C.C.F. is a privately run facility by Correctional Corporation of America, located in Whiteville, TN.

Up to that time, my teaching experience was limited to a Bible class on Sunday or Wednesday, one quarter every few years at the Collierville church of Christ. I recall preparing that first lesson on the plan of salvation and wondering how it would be received. But what I found was a group of men that had a great respect for the Word, with a lot of questions, and I learned quickly "...*be ready always to give an answer...*" (1 Peter 3:15).

Five congregations now have worship services at the facility; the Collierville church is responsible for the second Sunday of every month. When I held my first service, I discovered a number of Christians who had fallen to sin and were thankful that we were there to lead the worship service. Many visitors come to our services, which gives us the opportunity to teach them the Word and answer their questions. Some believe and are baptized, and some do not believe.

After several months, I asked and received permission to teach the Bible on a weekday, every week. Over the years, this has grown to three and four days a week, plus gaining access to another prison, the Whiteville Correctional Facility, which houses fifteen hundred inmates. The Lord's church in the W.C.F. started with two members and now has over forty men attending services.

FROM THE HEART OF...

We offer the inmates *Truth for the World Bible* correspondence courses. Thousands of courses have been taken by the men and graded by the Collierville church. Because of this work, over three hundred have been baptized into Christ. Just think of the number of men and women in prisons and jails who are willing to hear, believe and obey the gospel! Read Romans 10:13-17.

Following is an excerpt from an inmate at the Whiteville Correctional Facility:

...The environment I am in is a very trying one. I look to Christ to keep me each day. Giving thanks for all things to the Father. I am persecuted often, true enough, but I am not to be focused on the things of this world. I am to look ahead for what is to come for eternity. I have found Christ through my confession of Him being my Lord and being baptized into his body and I shall remain focused upon Him and follow Him.

Brother Macy brings us encouragement as scheduling permits and he always tells us, “stay in the Word men”. This is what we all need to do, Stay in the Word!

I was baptized into the body of Christ by Brother Macy on June 27th, 2009. I am now a new creature, all things of the past died when I was submerged beneath the water. When I rose up out of the water I arose a new creature. Now I am always looking upward for my guidance. Trying my best to conduct myself in a pleasing manner towards the Father.

I often feel as though there is no one to talk with, no one to trust but this is speaking of physical beings. I may be physically alone but I always have Christ right there where I am. In Him I find trust, peace, joy and beyond measure. Being away from home, family, and friends is very difficult. Trusting in the Father and giving Him thanks for all things brings me the greatest peace and joy. What I do I do for His glory, not mine or anybody else's... Trusting in Him, Jerry

“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37,38). †

Jim Macy lives and worships with the Collierville Church of Christ and lives in Rossville, Tennessee, USA

FROM THE HEART OF...

Franklin Correctional Institution and Franklin County Jail

James Lee

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” Acts 16:35.

The prisoners incarcerated in the Florida prisons are hearing the good news about Jesus through the work of James and Susan Lee. James got involved in



the Prison Ministry in 2006 after hearing a presentation by Tom Dugan of Airport Road Church of Christ in Crestview, Florida. James and Susan accepted responsibility for 18 Bible Correspondence Courses at the Franklin Correctional Institution. James helped with a Jail Ministry and was excited to contact the Chaplain at the facility to become a Chaplain Volunteer. He teaches a Bible class every week now on Tuesday afternoon from 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

The Lees currently have over 900 inmates enrolled in their Bible correspondence courses, designed especially for inmates. James reports: “We start the new enrollees with ‘*There is A Better Way*’ series which consists of five lessons. These studies clearly show the prisoners a better way of life, offering the real hope in Jesus Christ. Along with the course, we include a tract and a return self-addressed, stamped envelope. We also have a Baptism Questionnaire Form we include when they desire to be baptized.

“The next course builds on that teaching and consists of five lessons entitled *Prisoners of Hope*. We move on from there with lessons from the book of Acts to a series entitled, *Understanding the Bible*. The student receives a nice Certificate of Completion after each set of lessons. We send along with the Certificate, the book, *The Church of the Bible* by J.C. Choate, when we re-

FROM THE HEART OF...

turn the first set of graded lessons, with a typed set of lessons with True/False and Multiple Choice questions to be completed for grading. We also use the book, *The Gospel of Christ* by brother J.C. Choate. The World Evangelism team provides these great resources for our ministry, along with other books such as *The Seekers Bible Study Course* and *Beginners Bible Correspondence Course*. We appreciate Wayne Barrier, Betty Choate, Louis and Bonnie Rushmore and others in that organization for these valuable resources.

“We are also very thankful for others who volunteer their time in grading the lessons and making files and copies, folding letters, and addressing envelopes. Susan spends hours each day at the computer, entering data and typing letters. Sister Anne Wright of Perry, who is a retired school teacher, grades most of the lessons. Anne says she really enjoys grading the courses and reading all of the positive comments written by the inmates. Richard and Susie Mattman look up and verify the location information on all new enrollees every week. They also are involved in other facets of the work, such as making new files and helping with envelopes and anything else that is needed. Debbie Mulligan volunteers her time and resources in mailing out birthday cards to those who are enrolled in our courses. There are others like Althea and Oakley Slaughter, in their 80’s, who offer support and help in any way they can; they even fold letters and lessons. We have individuals and congregations that help by sending stamps to cover the postage for the lessons. All are such an encouragement to us by their tireless assistance in doing whatever is needed and by their encouragement and support and prayers.

“We also are involved in the Franklin County Jail, offering Bible correspondence courses and having a weekly Bible class and individual studies. At the jail, we labor with people who work and live in Franklin County and are in trouble. Most turn to the Lord when they get into trouble, and we want to be there to teach them the truth and to provide them with tools to teach others the better way that they have learned. I go out to the Jail every Monday from 2:30-4:00 p.m. and teach a Bible Class. We have had our first baptism service at the Jail, with three being converted through the studies. We used our portable baptismery that was donated by brother Harry Singletary.

“*The Sheriff has recently approved for the GBN Satellite dish to be installed!* The dish has been ordered for installation in February 2010. This will broaden and enhance our teaching efforts. The programs stream 24 hours a day — seven days a week — and will be available to all inmates at the facility. This jail houses about 30 male state inmates, as well as females who are currently not being reached with the Gospel.

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“The year 2009 was a great year for our work. We mailed out over 10,000 Bible Correspondence Courses and gave away over 2,000 teaching tracts. We also awarded over 100 Bibles that were donated to us. Our ministry resulted in 72 precious souls being baptized into Christ, and we know several more were restored. If you would like to help us with this work, please contact us at: Franklin County Church of Christ, P.O. Box 456, Eastpoint, FL 32328, or Stewartsville Church of Christ, P.O. Box 93, Cloverdale, AL 35617. Some items we need each month are: stamps, envelopes, tape, copy paper, ink, toner etc.” †

James Lee worships with the Franklin Church of Christ in Eastpoint, Florida, USA

Gibson County Jail Ministry

Jody Evans

On August 28, 2007, after much prayer and almost a year of Sunday morning Bible study, God answered our prayers. The first inmates of Gibson County Correctional Complex were allowed to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

On that day, Sheriff Chuck Arnold and his staff transported five inmates to Bethany Church of Christ to be baptized for the remission of their sins. In October of that year six more obeyed the Gospel. In November, a group donated a portable baptistery to our county jail whereby any future baptisms could be performed on site. Since that beginning, we have baptized 236 inmates in the Gibson County Jail ministry.

We now have five churches of Christ working together in this effort. We have a women’s ministry, a men’s ministry, and a Spanish ministry. There are morning classes and evening classes. We are blessed to have four elders, and five Gospel preachers, along with many other members, teaching the Gospel in the Gibson County jail.

Not only are we reaching the inmates in the system, but we are having an effect on the inmates’ family members obeying the Gospel, too. Every time I go to a Gospel meeting in our county, I see someone we taught in our jail ministry. I see their children in the assembly because we taught and visited their mother or grandmother or father. To God be the glory.

In a united effort, churches of Christ in our area are making our county

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a safer and better place to live. Brothers, we have a mission field in every county in our state, in every state in our country. It is called the county jail.

Our Lord said, "I was in prison and you visited me." We have the answer for crime. It is called the Gospel. Make your area a better place to live. Start a jail ministry in your county. It does not cost much to do this ministry. Step out in faith and see what our God can do.

Our God has now opened a door in the Veterans Retirement Home. We do a ministry there every Thursday. †

Jody Evans worships with the Bethany Church of Christ in Trenton, Tennessee, USA.

Women's Jail Ministry

Fonda Milligan

"I was a stranger and you invited me in; naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25: 35,36).

The ladies who are currently involved with the Jail Ministry attend the Bethany Church of Christ, and the Dyer Church of Christ. These ladies have the privilege of going into the Gibson County Jail to deliver the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the women inmates who are incarcerated there.

In many cases, these prisoners have never heard the truth. They cannot locate a particular book of the Bible. They find it hard to believe that they can be forgiven, and become new creatures. This Gospel is compelling good news for them.

Our work begins with simple Bible study, which gives them hope, love, and life everlasting. We sing, we laugh, we pray. We study, and we cry with them. We introduce them to the Word and what it takes to be saved. We are the conduit that helps restore those who have turned away from God. We guide them toward living righteous lives as new creatures. We help them see the tremendous gift that they can offer their children and families by sharing this powerful Gospel upon going home.

It is so important to have them see that God must be in their lives in order to have the strength to turn away from the old life of sin. We explain that the Bible is no respecter of persons, and the Bible does not contradict itself. We study about false teachers, the one church, the great sacrifice of Jesus, and the

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New Covenant. We discuss what it means to be a New Testament Christian and we back it up with God's Word. We help them become more familiar with the Bible by going to the Scriptures for all teaching and guidance.

What are some of the goals of the Women's Jail Ministry?

Turn desperation into salvation (to hear, to believe, to repent, to confess and to be baptized into Christ and to live faithful).

Erase the old perception and become that new creature.

Activate the desire inside these ladies to study God's Word.

Make an everlasting difference in the lives of these women by sharing the Truth.

Working in the Jail Ministry is not for everyone. Sometimes we must step out of our comfort zone and test the water. It takes faith. It takes the willingness to do God's will and teach the Gospel in an unfamiliar and sensitive environment. **You need to be prepared for the change it will make in *your* life as you help to change the lives of others.**

Fonda Milligan worships with the Bethany Church of Christ in Trenton, Tennessee, USA.

Tishomingo County Jail

Ricky Fields & Rick Wixom

Seven years ago, Jim Estes (preacher at Berea Church of Christ at the time), was helping the Booneville Church of Christ with its jail ministry. Jim asked Rick Wixom to get involved, and reluctantly he agreed. A few months later, when brother Jim decided to move and work with the Booneville church, the men at Berea decided to start a jail ministry with the Tishomingo County Jail. Berea was involved with the Tishomingo county jail for nearly a year when the Pleasant Grove Church of Christ came on board.

Berea and Pleasant Grove rotate weeks so that each week someone is working with the prisoners. Various methods and materials are used for teaching, but each class is biblically based with lots of chapters and verse reading. The men who participate are very hungry for the Word. They have their Bibles, pen and paper in hand, and they ask a lot of questions. They love to discuss doctrine. The unique thing about jail ministry is that these men hear the Gospel presented to them by many religious groups; this gives us an op-

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portunity to use the Bible itself to show them the Truth. We learned very quickly that preparation is a must, which makes this ministry a benefit to both the teacher and the pupil. Due to changes at the jail, we were out of service for awhile, but now we are again fully involved.

Our ministry has baptized two people in two years. However, only God knows the good that has come from our efforts. It has been a very uplifting opportunity to serve the ones we have come in contact with by sharing Christ with them and at the same time serving God. The Berea Church of Christ is blessed to support this effort, and we find it very rewarding. Each person involved will tell you that because of this ministry they have grown tremendously in the faith. †

Debtors

John Stacy

Years ago, King Charles V was loaned a large sum of money by a merchant. The note came due, but the King was bankrupt and unable to pay. The merchant gave a great banquet for the King. When all the guests were seated and before the food was brought in, the merchant had a large platter placed on the table and a fire lighted on it. Then taking the note out of his pocket, he burned it up. The King threw his arms around the merchant and wept. Like the King, we owe a debt to God that we will never be able to repay. The note came due, and we were bankrupt. Two thousand years ago, God through Christ tore up the note. We should be eternally grateful. †

John Stacy is an author of many religious study books, a former missionary, and one of the ministers of the St. Joseph Avenue Church of Christ in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.



How Do You Measure Up?

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.

But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

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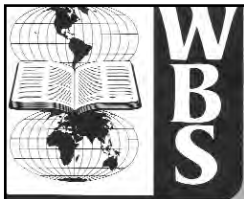
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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

- 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.

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- 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

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verses Search (from Page 30)

1. As long as he lives.
2. As long as he lives.
3. She is released from that marriage commitment.
4. adulteress.
5. The law died, therefore, we are free to be married to another, Christ.
6. body, dead.
7. bear fruit.
8. newness, oldness.
9. Certainly not!
10. We become aware of what sin is and the seriousness of sin.
11. dead.
12. life, death.
13. holy, holy.

Who Am I? (page 98)

Answer: Elisabeth

Where Am I? (page 99)

Answer: Corinth

Bible Find (from Page 85)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Dear Teacher,

Warmest greetings to you and all my Christian brethren abroad, in Jesus' name.

Teacher, I received my new courses, and I appreciate your effort put toward making it possible to have me as a student of this World Bible School. I cherish studying with you because the studies have brought about a great change in my life. Since I made up my mind to give my life to Christ, I tell you the truth, things have not been the same. My life is now hid in Christ Jesus, and there's true repentance and a total turning away from my old ways to a New Testament Christian. I wish you always pray for God's sufficient grace in my life to do His good will as commanded us.

Besides, I will hopefully use these lessons to teach others so that they will be converted and be New Testament Christians too. I want to start a church of Christ in my area.

This course has made me know much truth from the Bible, and I realize that the church of Christ is speaking directly from the Bible, and not like others who are bound to human doctrine. I pray they can understand the truth about God's word, and that they will always do what the word of God says and not the word of man.

*From your loving student,
Peter Q.*

[Note: Peter has now been released from prison and is in a Bible training school, intending to devote his life to evangelism.]