

VOLUME SIXTY-SIX

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

PAGE 101

FROM CREATION UNTIL NOW

I Used to Wonder

Tommy Durden

I used to wonder, why go to worship,
and bow my head in prayer?
But now I know: I find a peace
that's ever waiting there.

I used to wonder, why sing those songs,
just empty words I'd see?
But now I know the worth of praise —
great joy it gives to me.

I used to wonder, why sit so quiet,
and hear the preacher speak?
But now I know the strength it gives
to the feeble and the weak.

I used to wonder, why break the bread,
and drink fruit of the vine?
But now I know Christ's sacrifice
that saved this soul of mine.

I used to wonder, why pass the plate,
for me to weekly give?
But now I know the selfless joy —
I give to really live.

I used to wonder so very much,
when I was out in sin;
But, in God's fam'ly, now *I know* —
I bid you, friend, come in!



Let's pretend...

We were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the first Gospel sermon was preached. Listening closely, I was convicted of my sin and realized that my soul was lost. At the end of the sermon, I cried out, "Men and brethren, what must I do [to be forgiven]? (Acts 2:37).

The apostle Peter replied, "*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*" (2:38).

Without argument, I obeyed those simple commands, and my sins were forgiven. At the same time, "... *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (2:47).

The wonderful fact is that we don't have to pretend!

Obedience to God, the forgiveness of sins, and birth into the one church (family) that Christ died to save is — today — the same simple process that it was on that day when the church was begun: Hear the good news of Jesus, believe that Gospel, turn away from sin, confess your faith in Jesus as God's Son, be buried with Him in baptism so that your sins can be washed away (Acts 22:16), and God promises to add you to the church of Christ (Romans 16:16).

The Voice of History Concerning Churches

The record of the past 2,000 years shows these facts concerning the establishment of prominent religious bodies:

CHURCH	FOUNDER	PLACE	TIME
Church of Christ	Jesus Christ	Jerusalem	33 A. D.
Roman Catholic	Boniface III	Rome	606 A. D.
Lutheran	Martin Luther	Germany	1520 A. D.
Episcopalian	Henry VIII	England	1534 A. D.
Presbyterian	John Calvin	Switzerland	1536 A. D.
Congregational	Robert Browne	England	1550 A. D.
Baptist	John Smythe	Holland	1607 A. D.
Methodist	John Wesley	England	1739 A. D.
Latter Day Saints (Mormon)	Joseph Smith	America	1830 A. D.
Adventists	William Miller	America	1830 A. D.
Christian Scientist	Mary Baker Eddy	America	1866 A. D.
Jehovah's Witnesses	Charles T. Russell	America	1872 A. D.

Which of these identification marks matches the church of which you are a member?

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



Needed: More Godly Elders

Byron Nichols

I am quite concerned as I think about the advancing age of many who have been faithful elders, preachers, teachers, and selfless servants in general. I don't want to be unduly pessimistic, but I am concerned about some who are already and others who will later be succeeding these stalwart Christians as leaders in the Lord's church. It is my judgment that there is especially a present scarcity of brethren who are spiritually equipped to assume the role of godly elders in our congregations.

I am not apprehensive because I fear that the church will be without leaders. I have no doubt that there will be many who will function as leaders, but my concern is just what kind of leaders they will be.

It is important that we realize that elders are not the only leaders in the church. This was true in the New Testament, and it will always be true. That is not bad — rather, it is good. Many faithful brethren who are not elders and may never be elders possess considerable skill as leaders. These men of God can be a great blessing in a congregation as they serve in submission to the authority of the elders of their congregation. Some of these men, in spite of their leadership ability, will never be able to serve as an elder, due to their inability to meet the qualifications and attributes specified for elders in the Scriptures, most notably in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Their lack of qualifications may not have anything at all to do with their spiritual qualities. For example, I know Christian men who are very spiritually mature, yet they are not married. Does that mean that they are unable to serve the Lord, even to some extent as a leader in the church? Not at all. Other godly men are married, but they have

no children. The Bible shows clearly that they cannot serve as an elder, but they can still serve in many other ways that can lead others to a greater life in Christ. More examples could easily be given of men who can be and are leaders in the church, but who for various reasons cannot do so as an elder. In all of these cases, these brethren can most certainly be wonderful leaders, but must lead in ways that do not usurp the authority and leadership of their elders.

The fact that elders are usually not the only leaders in a local congregation is all the more reason for the utmost care, caution, and concern to be given in the selection of elders. It is highly unlikely that any congregation will ever undertake to do anything as crucial to the welfare of that church as their selection of men to serve in the capacity of elders. Yes, I understand and agree that the hiring of a preacher is a matter of much importance. Preachers are responsible for faithfully proclaiming the Word of God, and they typically have a more public role within the congregation than the elders have. Preachers are in a position to do a lot of good. However, even when not intending to, a preacher can also do considerable harm. It is the responsibility of the elders to oversee the entire flock, including the preacher. If the preacher should start teaching or doing things that are contrary to the Scriptures, the elders have the responsibility to correct that situation. Paul told Titus that one who would be a bishop (or elder) must be one who is *“holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict”* (Titus 1:9). Other passages, such as Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2, reiterate the necessity of elders being men who are knowledgeable in God’s Word and are spiritually-minded. They are to correct and admonish on the basis of their knowledge of and proper application of God’s Word. When men have been chosen as elders and they are lacking the knowledge and ability or the willingness to deal effectively with such situations, are they fulfilling their responsibilities? Did the congregation fulfill its responsibility in selecting such men to serve in that capacity? If the men chosen were not qualified, whose fault is it that they were nonetheless selected?

Hopefully we can see that elders have taken upon themselves a tremendous responsibility. They are ultimately answerable for whether a congregation is faithful or unfaithful. They are to be examples of faithfulness and doctrinal soundness to their flock (1 Peter 5:3, Hebrews 13:17). This is not a matter to be taken lightly, for elders *“watch out for your souls, as those who must give account...”* (Hebrews 13:17).

May God bless the church with many more elders who will truly shepherd the flock in view of the coming judgment of us all. †



God Is Able

Jerry Bates

In Ephesians 3:20, we find an interesting phrase. This verse affirms that God is able to do more than we can even ask or think. The Greek word for “able” is *dunamai*, the word from which we get the word dynamite, and it means to have power. God has great power, but the question is, how much power?

Many people think God is much like man, bigger and more powerful than a “normal” human, but nevertheless, still much like man. However, some humans can do amazing things. There is currently a TV show entitled, “Superhumans”. That show concerns tales of people from around the world who have unique abilities. One such account involves a man who somehow has the ability to have over 220 volts of electricity pulsate through him without harming him. An electric current that would kill most individuals apparently did not harm him at all. Indeed, there are some “superhumans” who have amazing abilities.

Is God merely a “superhuman”? Isaiah asks an important question in Isaiah 40:18. *“To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?”* A similar expression is found in 40:25. Can we compare God to a superhuman? How can we determine how much power God has? One way we can determine His power is by His name. In Genesis 14:18, we are introduced to Melchizedek, who is described as being a priest of “God Most High”. This is from the Hebrew word, “*elyone*”, which originally meant the Strong One”. God is represented as having complete sovereignty. In Genesis 21:33, God is called “the Everlasting God”. We normally think this entails time, which it obviously does, however, it involves more than that. Not

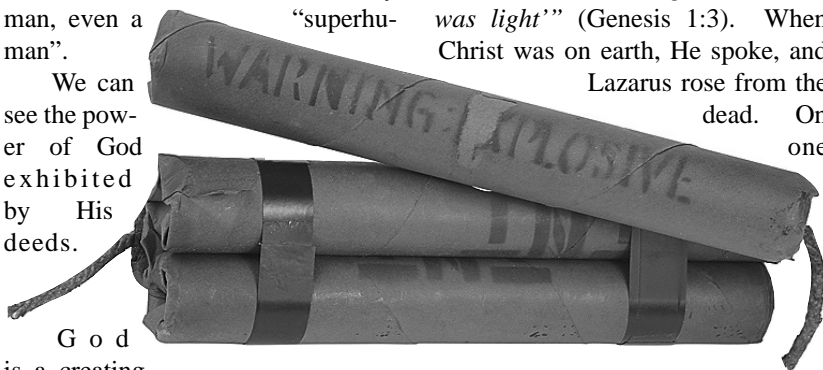
only is God eternal in the sense that there is no beginning or end, He is also unlimited in every detail. Every attribute (e.g. love, kindness, glory, truth, righteousness, etc.) is unlimited. Paul testified that His love surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). In Genesis 17:1, God is called “*El Shaddai*”, God Almighty. The context is the announcement of the birth of Isaac. In order to assure Abraham that he would give birth to a son, God reminded Abraham that He was God Almighty. When Sarah laughed, God asked, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” (Genesis 18:14). No power is as great as God. Unquestionably, these names cannot describe any man, even a “superhuman”.

We can see the power of God exhibited by His deeds.

God is a creating God. “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork*” (Psalm 19:1). The writer of Hebrews proclaims that the worlds were made of things that are not visible, that is, they were made out of nothing. No man can do that. Man can fashion some wondrous things, but they always start with

something and alter it into something completely different. In the May 20, 2010 *Science* magazine, a biologist claimed to have “created” artificial life in a test tube. However, the same article also stated that he started with four bottles of chemicals on a synthesizer from information processed to a computer. True “creation” is forming something from nothing; therefore, this would not qualify for “creation”. No human can create, in spite of fantastic claims to the contrary.

God’s power is also exhibited in His Word. God simply spoke the world into existence. “*And God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light’*” (Genesis 1:3). When Christ was on earth, He spoke, and Lazarus rose from the dead. On one



occasion, Christ was on the Sea of Galilee with His disciples when a great storm arose. The disciples thought they were going to die, but Jesus simply spoke and even the winds and waves obeyed His voice. “*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish*

what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). Indeed, no man has this kind of power.

God is able, in contrast to man. The Greek word translated “able” is used four other times in Ephesians, each time in reference to man being able to do something. It is interesting, though, that in each case, we are able to do it only because God gives us something first. In Ephesians 3:4, Paul affirms that we are able to understand the mystery of God, although we can understand it only because He has revealed it to man. In Ephesians 6:11, Paul testifies that we can conquer Satan, but only if we put on the armor of God. Just two verses later, Paul encourages us to “...*put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*”. Still, we can stand against Satan only if we put on the armor of God. If we put on the whole armor of God, we are then able to overcome whatever forces Satan may bring against us. In Ephesians 6:16, we are urged to take the shield of faith, whereby we may be able to quench the fiery darts of Satan. Notice that in each case we are able to do something only because God makes us able.

What is the implication of the above discussion? Spiritually, we can do nothing alone. God is able, and with His help, we become able. Without Him, we can do nothing. We do not have to go through life on our

own power. God wants us to trust Him, and we should, because He has inexhaustible power. He is able take a selfish sinful heart and fashion it in the image of God Himself. He can make us able to do anything He wants us to do. Paul said, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Philippians 4:13). Some want to take this verse out of context and insist that we can do whatever we want, as long as we believe in Christ. Paul does not teach that. However, he is teaching that we can bear any trial or withstand any temptation because an eternal and All-Powerful Christ will give us strength to overcome. With Him, we can do it; without Him, we can do nothing. God is able, and He makes us able! †

Jerry Bates not only serves as Associate Editor of The Voice of Truth International, but he is actively involved in the mission efforts of the “World Evangelism” team in various parts of Asia and Africa. He and his wife, Paula, work out of Winona, Mississippi, USA.

**God is able,
and with
His help, we
become able.
Without Him,
we can do
nothing.**

Two dictionary definitions in particular pertain to the way the noun, “cause,” is used within this article. They are: “a reason for an action or condition” and “a principle or movement militantly defended or supported.” Assembled in the phrase “cause of Christ,” herein, the emphasis and focus is a reason for subsequent activity manifesting itself as militant Christianity. In other words, “the cause of Christ” in these paragraphs refers to the church for which Jesus Christ died to establish, purchasing it with His blood (Acts 20:28), over which He is the Head (Colossians 1:18), and for which He will return to take back with Him to heaven (John 14:1-3). However, the usage of the phrase “the



The Cause of Christ!

Louis Rushmore

cause of Christ” is not a ho hum reference merely to a collection of Christians in some community, but as reference to the Lord’s church should be, it is an allusion to a vibrant, active, living organism.

It is not unusual for the New Testament to use various words to represent the concept of the New Testament church, emphasizing different characteristics of it. Jesus used the words “*church*” and “*kingdom*” interchangeably (Matthew 16:18-19). The apostle Paul used the words “*church*” and “*body*” to refer to the same thing (Ephesians 1:22-23). Likewise, he used the words “*house*” (1 Timothy 3:15), “*temple*” (1 Corinthians 3:15), and ‘wife’ or “*bride*” (Ephesians 5:22-32; cf. Revelation 22:17) to emphasize traits of the Lord’s church.

Very much in the sense of “the cause of Christ,” Luke records the words of the apostle Paul referring to the church as “*the way*”. “*But this I con-*

fess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). The word, "way," means, "a road" or "a route," literally or figuratively. Consequently, when referring to the Lord's church, "*the way*" represents the high, spiritual road or route to a home in heaven forever with God.

Sometimes, the Greek word for "way" is also translated as "highway" or "journey"; if we are Christians, we are on the highway to heaven, and we are on a journey. Consider these uses of "*the way*" in keeping with the emphasis intended herein: "*the way of salvation*" (Acts 16:17), "*the way of God*" (Acts 18:26), "*the way of truth*" (2 Peter 2:2) and "*the way of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:21). Who can forget the resounding words of Jesus Christ Himself along these lines: "... *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6)?

All of the foregoing was noted to herald loudly in your ears that "the cause of Christ," otherwise observed in Scripture as "*the church*" (Acts 2:47) or "*the way*", is more important than any other institution, material, or immaterial. **The cause of Christ is more important than any earthly pursuit and any mortal idea or opinion. The "cause of Christ" ought to be the catalyst for the consistent and perpetual animation**

of every child of God. Everything a Christian thinks, does, or says ought to conform to his or her high regard for "the cause of Christ."

Therefore, New Testament Scripture teaches that Christians ought to suffer personal grievances if necessary rather than risking injury to the Lord's church ("the cause of Christ"). "*Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*" (1 Corinthians 6:7; see also 1 Peter 3:19-23).

There are a number of additional ways by which "the cause of Christ" can be harmed, sometimes irreparably. Internal, congregational conflict results in division between brethren, resulting in a reproach against "the cause of Christ" in the non-Christian community (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 11:18; 12:25). We must be careful that we are not the ones "*by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*" (2 Peter 2:2).

"The cause of Christ" is not a social club or other earthly organization over which its members ought to compete for control. Jesus Christ is the Head of His church, of which Christians are members, and the New Testament comprises the bylaws for it. No subject over which Christians must come to a decision respecting inconsequential details ought to disrupt the harmony, focus, and direction

of “the cause of Christ.” The color of carpet, the location of a structure in which to assemble for worship, and certainly the dimwitted mentality of rule or ruin are not sufficient matters for which anyone should risk injuring “the cause of Christ.”

If every Christian had as his or her motivation the single-minded thrust in life to further “the cause of Christ” before himself or herself and any earthbound interest, we would enthusiastically embrace Christianity more fully and faithfully than we ever have before, using ourselves up in and for “the cause of Christ.” We would do our Christianity in the spirit of James 2:14-26 and the doers of faith recorded in Hebrews 11. Further, we would quickly marginalize impenitent, sinful Christians who

would tear the fabric of fellowship with divisiveness (Titus 3:10-11) or persistent sin (John 8:34; 1 John 3:8).

The “cause of Christ” or the Lord’s church is paramount in importance because it was devised first in the mind of God from eternity (Ephesians 3:10,11), and because Jesus purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28). It is the body of the saved (Acts 2:47), and our Lord is coming back for it and none other (John 14:1-3). **How important is “the cause of Christ” to you?** †

Louis Rushmore is an Associate Editor of The Voice of Truth International and the Editor of Gospel Gazette Online (www.gospelgazette.com), as well as a World Evangelism Team Member focusing on India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Burma). He is the author of several Bible study books and tracts, and he and his wife, Bonnie, reside in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

The color of carpet, the location of a structure in which to assemble for worship, and certainly the dimwitted mentality of rule or ruin are not sufficient matters for which anyone should risk injuring “the cause of Christ.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

Like An Eagle	Tom Kelton	14
Jesus Is God!	Gary C. Hampton	15
The Sacrifice of Jesus	Andrew House	16
Are You Listening to the Holy Spirit?	Kevin L. Moore	18

EVIDENCES

Christian Evidences	T. Pierce Brown	20
And God Created Cells That Make Waves	Dave Everson	23

THE WORD OF GOD

The Perfect Hiding Place	Bob Plunket	25
Is God to Blame That We Do Not Understand... ..	Kerry Holton	26
The Value of the Holy Scriptures	Wayne Jackson	27

SALVATION

The Dichotomous Nature of Man	Michael L. King	33
Have You Been Cheated?	Jim Faughn	35
Waiting Too Long	Hershel Dyer	36

THE CHURCH

The Kingdom of God and the Things... ..	Sunny David	37
Our Greatest Need	Dalton Key	39

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Even When It Hurts	Bobby Wheat	40
No Other Doctrine	Owen D. Olbricht	42
Authority	Joe C. Magee	44
Speaking the Truth (In Love)	Shan Jackson	46
Yeast Spreads	Rick Cunningham	48

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Martha or Mary	Bonnie Rushmore	50
Equipped for Work of Ministry	Wayne Barrier	52
Silently Suffering	Ronny Crocker	54

WORSHIP

In His Memory	Roger Johnson	55
The Foolishness of Preaching	Keith Parker	59

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Aquila, Priscilla, and Epaphroditus Had Real... ..	Maxie B. Boren	62
Difficulties Are Part of Normal Existence... ..	Ronald D. Bryant	64
Do I Have to "Go to Church"?	Steve Higginbotham	65
The Fair Woman Without Discretion	Ken Tyler	66
Being an Example	J.C. Choate	67

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Training in Positives.....	Betty Burton Choate.....	71
Love Your Children.....	Vance Hutton.....	73

PROVERBS 17:22

Humor.....		75
------------	--	----

HEY YOU KIDS!

Focused.....	SPC Alex Gibson.....	77
Evolution? What do you think?.....	Ashley Bates.....	79

TEXTUAL STUDIES

First Timothy 4:1.....	Glenn Colley.....	82
Baptized with the Holy Spirit.....	Royce Frederick.....	83

BIBLE CHARACTERS

The Disciple Jesus Loved.....	Dan R. Owen.....	85
Some New Testament VIPs.....	Owen Cosgrove.....	87

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Why Must I Give?.....	Bobby Dockery.....	91
-----------------------	--------------------	----

Is One as Good as Another?.....	Wendell Winkler.....	93
What Does It Mean to “Obey the Gospel”?.....	Dennis Gulledege.....	95

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

Evangelism Now and Later.....	Loy Mitchell.....	96
Come To the Feast.....	Andy Jooste.....	97

BIBLICAL HISTORY

Sodom and Gomorrah.....	Rex Banks.....	99
-------------------------	----------------	----

NEW TRACTS

From Creation Until Now.....	Louis Rushmore.....	101
------------------------------	---------------------	-----

FEATURES, POEMS AND FILLERS

Needed: More Godly Elders.....	Byron Nichols.....	4
God Is Able.....	Jerry Bates.....	6
The Cause of Christ!.....	Louis Rushmore.....	9
Verse Search: Romans 8:1-17.....	Jerry Bates.....	28
Bible Find: Books of the Old Testament.....	Bonnie Rushmore.....	49
Christian Responsibilities to Other Christians.....		53
How Do You Measure Up: Matthew 12:33-37.....		70
5 Minute Bible Study: Mercy.....	Paula Bates.....	81
Who Am I?.....	Rebecca Rushmore.....	89
Where Am I?.....	Rebecca Rushmore.....	90
Quick Commentary on Crucial Verse: Isaiah 49:15,16.....		98

Like An Eagle

Tom Kelton

Environmentalists are saying a great deal about eagles today. They want them preserved as an endangered species. Christians can learn much from what the Bible says about eagles.

“He encircled him. He instructed him. He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings. So the Lord alone led him...” (Deuteronomy 32:10-12).

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself” (Exodus 19:4). *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles...”* (Isaiah 40:31).

The eagle is one of the largest and most powerful birds in the world. Some eagles weigh as much as twelve or thirteen pounds and have a wingspan of about seven feet.

The nests of eagles are called eyries. They are built mainly of sticks and are often lined with fresh green leaves while they are being used.

Once a year, the female lays one or two eggs, and they are carefully tended, sometimes even by the male eagle, until they hatch in about forty days. Both parents then guard the nest and take food to the young.

At about eleven or twelve weeks, a curious thing happens. If the eaglets have not ventured forth on their own, the parent eagle “stirs” or rocks the nest, tipping the eaglets out! The young eaglets flap about in panic, still novices at this flying business. The parent eagle hovers watchfully, waiting for the critical moment. With wings spread wide, the eagle then swoops down underneath those babies and delivers them back to the security of the eyrie.

Ours is a God of powerful gentleness. Ours is a God whose timing is perfect. Like the parent eagle, He is sensitive to our needs. He knows when the nest has become too comfortable and needs a little stirring. He, too, watches carefully, and, as with spread wings, catches us up, and brings us to Himself. But, He wants us to learn from our fluttering and flapping. He wants us to leave behind our panic and learn to wait on Him. Then, with our eyes on our parent eagle, we will begin to know what it means to soar on eagles’ wings! ✠

Before his death, Tom Kelton was a writer and preacher at Pharr, Texas, USA.

GOD

Jesus Is God!

Gary C. Hampton

Today, someone's son is simply his male descendant or one he has adopted. However, Christ was called the "Son of God" for another reason. To be sure, He was God's Son by birth (Luke 1:34,35), but the title "Son of God" most often refers to Jesus being of the same nature as God. When Jesus called God His Father, the Jews understood that He was claiming to be God (John 5:17-24). They were right! Jesus is God!

Jesus Was In the Beginning

The apostle that Jesus loved, John, tells us Jesus was God come down to earth. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made"* (John 1:1-3). John says that the Word was with God at the beginning and was God.

That all things were made by Him is proof that He is God, since God was the Creator. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1; compare Colossians 1:16,17). This Word that was God, John plainly shows to be Jesus. *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).

Jesus Is the Shining Image of God

The Hebrews writer thought of Jesus as God. *"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Hebrews 1:3). W.E. Vine would say that Jesus was the shining forth of God's glory and the very image of His substance.

In verse 8, the inspired writer who addressed the Hebrew brethren quotes Psalm 45:6,7. He states that God, the Father, is speaking to Jesus when He says, *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom."* In other words, God the Father is calling Christ, the Son, God! †

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

GOD

The Sacrifice of Jesus

Andrew House

At some point in your life, hopefully you have heard someone at least mention the sacrifice that Jesus made. Whether it was a preacher mentioning it in a sermon or a friend in passing conversation, Jesus' sacrifice has been talked about for the last two thousand plus years. I admit, sometimes when I think about Jesus' sacrifice, I just think about Him dying on the cross. My view of what He did to save the world is very limited in those moments, and I believe that all of us at some point have been guilty of not realizing the full sacrifice that Jesus made.

Matthew 26:47 describes the mob that Judas led to take Jesus away. They were armed with swords and staves. Was a mob, armed with weapons, necessary to arrest Jesus? We know that the answer is a resounding, "No". Jesus was no criminal, and the Bible states in 1 Peter 2:21,22 that He was without sin, so how humiliating would it have been for a blameless man to be dragged away like a criminal? Yet, Jesus did nothing to defend Himself, because it was all part of God's plan.



GOD

Matthew 26:59,60 says that the chief priests and elders sought false witnesses. The Sanhedrin (Jewish court) came together to try Jesus to convict Him and sentence Him to death, yet when they tried Him in their court they had to get liars to testify to convict Him. Most would fight for a new trial, but not Jesus. He went along with it, because it was all part of God's plan.

Then in the 27th chapter of Matthew, Jesus was brought before Pilate by the chief priests and elders because they could not carry out the death sentence without the Roman Empire signing off on it. Pilate, the governor that the case was brought before, had a chance to make things right. He had the power to release Jesus after he found out that He had done nothing wrong, but instead, Pilate tried to appease the crowd and still provide Jesus a way out. He said that he would release a prisoner, as was the custom (Matthew 27:15) — either Jesus or Barabbas, who was a hardened criminal. The chief priests and scribes motivated the crowd to choose Barabbas rather than Jesus. Imagine being Jesus, having just been wrongly convicted, standing in front of a crowd that holds your fate in their hands, and they choose a murderer.

Then in Matthew 27:26 Jesus was scourged. Scourging involved someone slashing a whip across the prisoner's back, and the whips they used were generally laced with glass or sharp pieces of metal to multiply the lacerations. Also keep in mind that the wounds would have made everything else that Jesus endured on His way to the cross even more unbearable.

In Matthew 27:27-31 the soldiers that were in charge of crucifying Jesus took over. They mocked and humiliated Him by pretending to worship Him, and then proceeded to spit on Him and to hit Him with a reed. This was not intended to inflict great injury to Jesus, but to be humiliating, although it was probably more painful than we usually think because of the wounds already dealt to His body.

After all of this, they led Jesus out, made Him drag His cross until He collapsed, and then when they finally got to their destination, they crucified Him. Being crucified was the pinnacle of His sacrifice, but we should keep in mind all of the events that led to it so we can have a greater understanding of what He went through.

Jesus — the Word, the sinless Son of God — dying for our sins was the greatest sacrifice ever made in the history of earth's existence. We should do our best to have the most knowledge about what He did and the maximum gratitude for the sacrifice He made for us. †

Andrew House is a dedicated young Christian in the church of Christ at Oldfield, Missouri, USA.

GOD

Are You Listening to the Holy Spirit?

Kevin L. Moore



Psalm 95, written about ten centuries before Christ by the prophet David, is an appeal to worship Jehovah with joy and thanksgiving and to humbly submit to His revealed will. In view of the disobedient Israelites of the past, readers are admonished: *“Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion...For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.’*

So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (verses 7-11, NKJV).

Why were these ancient Israelites ignorant of the ways of Jehovah? It was not because the divine will had been withheld from them or insufficiently communicated. It was not because the heavenly message was too complicated

GOD

to understand. Rather, they did not know God's ways because they refused to listen with open, receptive hearts, and therefore, carelessly disregarded the sacred Word of the Lord.

The Lord genuinely desires what is best for you and me. He wants to save us and to bless us, and for us to enjoy the heavenly rest that has been prepared for all who come to Him on His terms. But He cannot do anything for those who, through stubbornness or neglect, are unwilling to listen and obey.

God is still speaking to those who are willing to listen. Hebrews 3:7,8 declares, "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says [present tense]: 'Today, if you will hear

His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion..." Note that Psalm 95 is being quoted, but instead of the words being attributed to David (as in Hebrews 4:7), here the Holy Spirit is credited. This passage affirms not only the divine inspiration of Scripture, but also the current and continual relevance of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is saying, "Today..."

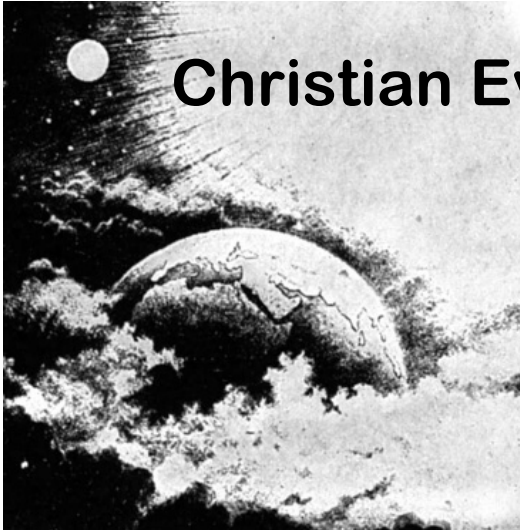
The expression "today" in this passage obviously has reference to the day on which David, through inspiration, penned these words, but it is also applicable to the day the writer of Hebrews quoted this psalm, and the day his readers first heard these words, and this very day that you and I are presently experiencing. In other words, each day that we live on this earth is not yesterday or tomorrow — it is always "today".

The Lord genuinely desires what is best for you and me. He wants to save us and to bless us, and for us to enjoy the heavenly rest that has been prepared for all who come to Him on His terms. But He cannot do anything for those who, through stubbornness or neglect, are unwilling to listen and obey. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (Hebrews 3:12-14).

Are we listening?



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Christian Evidences

T. Pierce Brown

We find in 1 Peter 3:15, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”* Yet there are some, even persons connected with the Lord’s church,

who are saying that we must simply accept what is said in the Bible by faith, for 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”* They argue that we cannot prove the correctness of what we believe by any logical or historical argument, but we must simply believe it because the Bible says it.

Of course, every Christian should believe what the Bible says, even if we cannot see why it is that way, and it is clear that there are many things we cannot prove by historical evidence. However, if we are talking to a person who is not convinced that the Bible is the Word of God, it is useless to tell him, “Just believe because the Bible says it.” The idea that our faith is to be simply “blind faith” because we cannot see evidence for some specific thing we believe is not correct. For example, there is no way to prove by scientific evidence that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. There is certainly no way to prove the evolutionary theory, either theistic evolution or any other. So we accept by faith what the Bible says about it. However, the unbeliever may need more evidence on the matter.

William Paley, who was born in 1743 and died in 1805, advanced and made popular an argument that had been around in principle for a long time. He said that if a person should find a watch, he would correctly conclude that it was designed by an intelligent force and could not have been produced

EVIDENCES

by random accidental natural means. He correctly reasoned that if a simple thing like a watch proves that there was a watchmaker, the complexity of the universe demands that there be a Designer.

John Stuart Mill thought there was a weakness in this argument, for he says that watches only imply watchmakers because we know from previous experience that watches are made by watchmakers. So, he says the argument is invalid because we do not know by previous experience that God designed the universe. Mill was wrong in his reasoning, for if we never saw a watch, everyone who can reason or know anything knows by previous experience that ANYTHING that shows complexity or design – even a simple thing like a table or chair – was designed and/or produced by an intelligent force. One need have no previous experience with a watch, but the most ignorant savage would know if he found a bow and arrow that it was not produced by a tornado blowing through the forest. Certainly, he could not know whether God or a specific man designed it or put it there, but he could know without question that neither a rabbit nor a tornado created it.

So it is true that we cannot prove that Christ died and rose again by the kind of reasoning Paley was using. But we can show that our belief in Him and in the validity of the Christian system is not just a matter of blind faith, as some, even in the Lord's church, would have us believe.

Isaiah 1:18 says, *“Come let us reason together.”* The fact that we are saved by faith and walk by faith and not by sight does not negate the fact that God expects us to reason and have logical reason for our faith. We can have a belief that is based upon evidence and logical reasoning in two ways. First, we may look at the Bible. It is a wonderful production. We may logically and properly raise the question, “From whence did it come?” In fact, we should do that, not merely accept it because Mama said so, or say, “I just believe because I have faith.” Just as we can logically prove that the universe was produced by a superior intellectual power, we can prove that only a Divine benevolent power could have produced the Bible, then an honest, logical mind must conclude that such a Divine benevolent power could not have lied or misrepresented the facts recorded about Christ. This is not simply blind faith, but faith based upon evidence that cannot be successfully refuted.

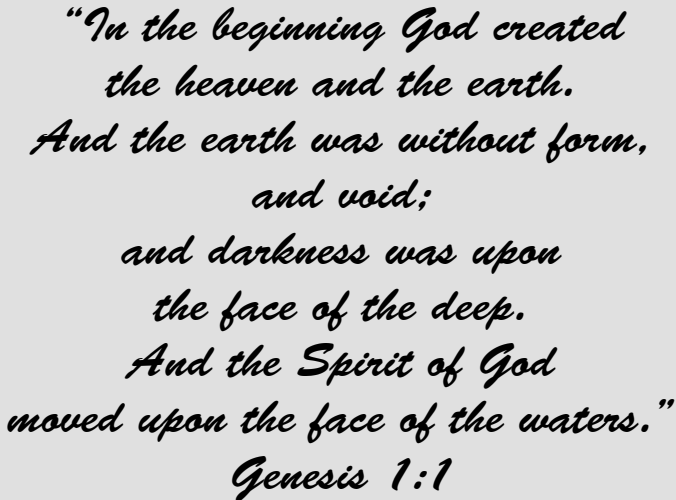
Third, there is ample evidence outside the Bible that Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected. One could not become a Christian just by an examination of those evidences, for those bare historical facts do not give meaning and purpose to what we might do. For example, one can discover by extra-biblical,

EVIDENCES

historical information that persons in the first century were immersed in water and met on the first day of the week to worship. But why they were baptized, and what it has to do with us cannot be discovered just by learning those facts. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, but it is not simply blind faith that must say, "I believe simply because I have faith." When we hear the Word of God, we have ample evidence that it is indeed the Word of God and could not have been produced merely by the wisdom of man.

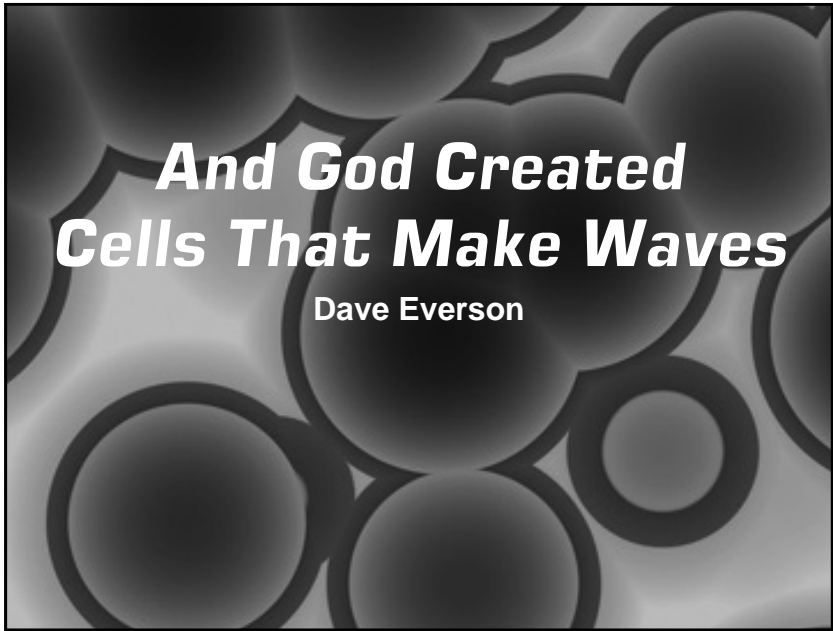
So our Christian life is a life of faith, and we believe things that we have not seen and could not see. But let us, therefore, not deny the value of William Paley's argument about design because that argument by itself does not prove that we should be Christians. The argument is valid, not only because it is logical, but because it is based upon the universal experience of all mankind. That is, everyone in the world who is a thoughtful, responsible being knows that although a pile of rocks might have been produced by a high wind, a building with windows, doors, and a roof could not have been. †

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) was a preacher and writer, living for many years in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.



*"In the beginning God created
the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form,
and void;
and darkness was upon
the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God
moved upon the face of the waters."
Genesis 1:1*

EVIDENCES



“Don’t make waves” is a common saying to have someone not disturb the status quo of a particular situation. In the human body, there are places where you want waves to be made. Let’s look at waves that are necessary for life.

The human body contains many amazingly different types of cells that carry on many unique functions. These cells are being studied to reveal the roles that they have in the body. Among some of the most interesting of these cells are those that control the rhythm of the movements needed within the body. The best examples of this are the heart cells and the cells of the digestive system. Let’s take a quick look at the rhythm makers of our bodies.

In order for the heart to work efficiently, the muscle cells must operate in a coordinated fashion from the top to the bottom. To make this happen, the heart contains special cells that serve as the pacemaker for the rest of the muscles. These specialized rhythm keepers are located in the right atrium and are called the Sinoatrial Node or S-A Node. These cells initiate an electrical impulse that causes a contraction of the muscle cells surrounding them. This triggers an impulse that travels down other conductive cells into an area between the chambers of the heart called the Atrio-Ventricular Node or A-V Node. The

EVIDENCES

muscle contraction then occurs in a very fluid manner in the heart, allowing the heart to push the blood through it into the body very effectively. This has to continue throughout our entire lives if we are to stay alive. The waves made in our heart are unique and effective at solving the problem of moving fluids through the body.

Doctors have tried for years to match the pumping ability of the heart without much success. Getting the blood to flow around the body is not a real problem, but getting it around the body with the right pressure is. In addition, the artificial pumps have been seen to damage the cells in the blood that the heart is to pump. So, for now, the heart that God created is still the best thing going.

Another group of cells that is very important for “making waves” is a newly discovered group of cells in the human digestive system. These waves in the digestive system are very important for moving food through the tube-like structure that is our digestive system. When our stomach “grows” and “moves”, we can feel the waves that result from these rhythm-producing cells.

Scientists at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario have pinpointed this unique group of star-shaped cells in the human gut that produces the normally gentle waves of muscle contractions called “peristalsis.” Peristalsis is the rhythmic contractions of gut muscles that move food along inside the digestive system, from our esophagus to the large intestine. When we have no food in our digestive tract, then we hear air moving around, which is the growl heard. These cells have been named the “interstitial cells of Cajal”.

This tiny group of cells determines how our digestive system knows at what pace to contract in order to move our food at the proper rate. If our food moves too fast, then we do not digest and absorb the nutrients out of it. If it moves too slowly, we remove too many products and water from the food, and it decreases the efficiency of digestion and absorption. In the stomach, the contractions occur at the rate of three per minute. The small intestine has 12 contractions per minute to move our food through at the proper rate.

Sometimes in our lives, it is a very good thing to “make waves”. From this information, we can see that when God designs something, it works with amazing complexity and ingenuity. †

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THE PERFECT HIDING PLACE

Bob Plunket

It is hard today to hide things where they cannot be found. There are metal detectors and even dogs that are trained to sniff out various scents. Some places would expose our treasure to dampness, others perhaps to fire and others to theft. The greatest treasure in this whole world is the Word of God. There has never been a book like it. Through the ages there have been those who have hated and despised it and would destroy it. David seems to have found the perfect hiding place for the Word of God. *“Thy word have I hid in my heart...”* (Psalm 119:11).

Yet, we tend to forget, as we grow older, every word of the verse. I remember an elderly sister trying to recall a verse. She could not put it all together. She, however, had hidden that verse in her life, in her conduct and disposition. She lived, through love and kindness, the verse that she could not quite quote. Hiding the Word in our deeds may be the most effective and the most lasting place to hide God’s Word. There have been places, and there are still some, where Bibles are not allowed. Men and women are punished for having them in their possession. The only Word we may have some day is the Word we have stored in our hearts and in our conduct. Neither prison, blindness, nor confiscation can keep it from us.

The hidden Word has many values. David says it keeps us from sinning against God (verse 11). It also keeps us from sinning against our fellowman and from many foolish mistakes. Hidden in our hearts, it is a light to our pathway (verse 105). This will keep us from stumbling in the dark. David says it brings us understanding. *“Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way”* (verse 104).

How do we store it? We must love it. David said, *“Oh, how love I thy law. It is my meditation all the day”* (verse 97). Then, too, we must study it. *“Study to show thyself approved unto God”* (2 Timothy 2:15). We must also live it and apply it.

How much of this treasure have you hidden in your heart and in your conduct? Who then has hidden the most of God’s Word? The one who looks the most like Jesus, for Jesus is the Word (John 1:14). †

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THE WORD OF GOD

Is God to Blame That We Do Not Understand the Bible Alike?

Kerry Holton

“Religious unity is a pipe dream...” Someone says, “There is no way believers in Christ will ever be united because there will always be disagreement on what the Bible means. The Bible can be interpreted differently.” Isn’t the person who makes such a statement blaming God for religious division? Isn’t he saying that God is at fault when we do not understand the Bible alike?

Let’s think this through. We should begin by establishing that God wants His people to be united. Paul wrote, “*I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Now, think about this with me. What kind of God would command religious unity and then reveal a message that allowed various interpretations? What kind of God would insist upon unity, but fail to provide a message whose meaning we could all unite upon? Only a God who did not sincerely care about unity, or one who was incapable of providing a way for His people to be united.

God must not be insincere when He says He wants real unity. God is no liar. So, is it that *He is incapable* of providing a guide that can be clearly understood? Is it that *He is not smart enough or powerful enough* to provide a message that unites?

No, it must not be God’s fault that religious people do not agree upon what the Bible means. Otherwise, He is not the All-Powerful God He claims to be. God wants unity and He has the ability to clearly reveal His will. If we do not understand the Bible alike, it must be *our* fault.

When two people interpret Scripture differently, one or both interpretations must be wrong. It cannot be the case that both interpretations are legitimate. If such is the case, God is to blame for the religious division we see all around us. God has revealed His will in such a way that makes possible the unity of His children. **We can understand the Bible alike.** People may interpret the Bible differently, but they shouldn’t. †

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

THE WORD OF GOD

The Value of the Holy Scriptures

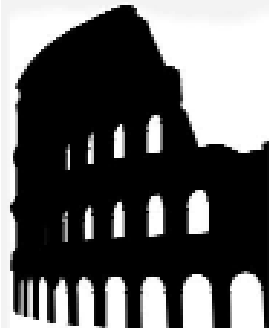
Wayne Jackson

The Maker of the universe has revealed Himself in a number of remarkable ways. His presence is manifest in the works of His creative genius (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). God is also seen in His providential acts of benevolence that so wonderfully bless humanity (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17). Even man's conscience, which testifies that rightness and wrongness exist, argues that there is a moral Ruler over the creation (Romans 2:14,15). All of these factors, however, as illuminating as they are, are insufficient to provide a saving knowledge of the Lord God. *Objective revelation*, i.e., the Bible, is needed to accomplish that task. Jehovah has thus benevolently favored the human family by providing us with the Sacred Scriptures.

Without the Word of God, man is woefully confused as to the meaning of life. No better commentator to this fact can be found than that of David Hume. Hume, an English skeptic, was perhaps the most influential opponent that Christianity has ever had. Of life, however, he penned these depressing words: "Where am I, or what? From what cause do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? ...I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty" (**Treatise of Human Nature**, Volume 1, p. 548). Contrast that with the words of another David, the shepherd king of Israel: "Though I walk though the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me..." (Psalm 23:1). Infidelity hasn't the remotest idea of the meaning of life. The Scriptures must supply this.

Some religions are based upon the philosophy of ideas. Thus, one accepts the philosophical premises of the system or he does not. Such schemes, however, from their very nature, are not provable. The Bible is not of this disposition. It is an historical document that is grounded in reality, not dreamy speculation. It is, therefore, verifiable! When critically examined, it demonstrates a wide variety of divine qualities that reveal a nature that testifies of its heavenly origin. For example, the Bible's cogent unity, its astounding prophecies, its lofty moral tone, the precise accuracy of its information (history, geography, etc.), all argue for the Scriptures' supernatural origin. The Bible demands human attention and only a very foolish person will ignore it. †

Wayne Jackson is a writer and preacher living in Stockton, California, USA.



Romans 8:1-17

Jerry Bates

1. To whom is it said there is no condemnation? (v. 1)
2. Those who are in Christ Jesus “do not walk according to the _____, but according to the _____. (v. 2)
3. What is it that the Law could not do and why? (v. 3)
4. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh in order to _____. (v. 4)
5. To be carnally minded is _____, but to be spiritually minded is _____ and _____. (v. 6)
6. Why is the above statement true? (v. 7)
7. If we belong to Christ, what or who dwells in us? (v. 9)
8. Why did Paul say we are debtors? (v. 12).
9. What must we do if we are going to live spiritually? (v. 13)
10. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the _____ of _____. (v. 14)
11. We have not received the spirit of _____, but we have received the Spirit of _____. (v. 15)
12. Since the above is true, what should we cry out? (v. 15)
13. Who are the two witnesses to the fact that we are the children of God? (v. 16)
14. Since we are children of God, we are _____ of God and _____ with Christ? (v. 17)

(see the back cover for answer)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin. He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Note: This section discusses the kind of life all Christians should live in Christ. Since we are now free from sin, the Spirit of Christ should control our hearts and minds to the extent that we live holy and pure lives. We are alive in Christ and have been adopted as children of God. Therefore, live as befits a child of God.

The Error of Naaman

Reuben Emperado

Many modern preachers today have fallen into the same error that Naaman made, when they think that God will do what they have already conceived in their minds. Naaman was a mighty warrior of the Assyrian army, but he had leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). His Hebrew slave told him that there was a prophet in Israel who could help him with his sickness. Naaman went to prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. Elisha told him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan river. At first Naaman was furious. He refused to obey the prescription of the prophet. The idea of dipping in the muddy river was an insult to his dignity. He already had a preconceived idea of how he might be healed. He thought that the prophet would meet him and wave his hands over him, and then he would be healed. He wanted a “dry healing” of his leprosy. He was angry when he was asked to dip in the River of Jordan because he could not see the connection between what he was asked to do and the healing of his disease. How could such a thing heal him? “This is outrageous!” Naaman thought. But we know that God is always right, no matter what man thinks. God’s thoughts are always higher than man’s thoughts, and God’s ways are always different and better than man’s ways (Isaiah 55:8).

So it is with the study of salvation and the importance of obeying God’s command to, “*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). It is incorrect to say that water baptism has no connection to the salvation of man, just because man cannot understand the wisdom of God and the importance of baptism in relation to our salvation. God, in the past, has used many different objects to accomplish His will and to test the faith of His people. Many times these things seem to have no relationship to the desired result. The connection is that they demand faith and obedience.

Baptism Is Part of God’s Plan to Save Man

God commanded his disciples to baptize those who believe in the Gospel for salvation (Mark 16:16). The faithful disciples followed this divine injunction (Acts 2:38). Men, who think themselves wiser than God, have protested against baptism because they cannot see the connection between the water in baptism and the forgiveness of sins. In their own thinking, how can water reach the deepest recesses of the human soul, to cleanse it? To them this is the

SALVATION



height of foolishness and is contrary to logic and human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-21). What can immersion in physical water have to do with the spiritual needs of man? Paul reminded us that we should not be “*high minded*” and should not be “*wise in our own conceits*” (Romans 11:20, 25). He said: “*But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?*” (Romans 9:20).

“Baptism Does Save Us Now”

The apostle Peter, in his epistle, clearly taught that baptism does save us. Only those who are blinded with the spirit of arrogance and prejudice will fail to see the truth of this verse: “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 3:21).

The passage clearly and emphatically states that baptism does also now save us. Peter explains that water baptism is “*not for the removal of the dirt from the body... but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*” This is the spiritual side of baptism. Water baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God, touching not only the body but also going deeper than the physical body of man as his spirit submits itself in obedience to God’s law. Of course, the carnal and the prejudiced mind cannot see this truth.

SALVATION

The NIV renders the verse in this manner: *“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:20,21).

Does baptism nullify the Gospel of Christ? No, it does not. In fact, it is in being baptized that a man declares his pledge and allegiance to God and shows his faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Correct, biblical baptism exalts the grace of God. Baptism is a demonstration of the saving grace of the Lord who died and rose victoriously from the grave.

Fallacy of Partial View

Many people have been guilty of the fallacy of Partial View. With a mind blinded by prejudice and arrogance, they have already decided for themselves what man is supposed to do in order to be saved. In such cases, they are no different from the six blind men from Hindustan, whose opinions were exceeding stiff and strong, as each one examined a particular part of an elephant and then reached varying conclusions about the type of creature before them — but they were all in the wrong because they were “seeing” only a partial view of the whole. Religiously, today, many people are guilty of the “fallacy of partial view”. They emphasize FAITH as the only condition of salvation, to the exclusion of the other things which are of equal and paramount importance.

There are many factors that contribute to the salvation of man, and all of them must be studied and weighed together. These things are: the love of God, the incarnation of Christ, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the preaching of the Gospel, faith, repentance, confession, obedience, baptism, and faithfulness until death, till Jesus comes. We believe that all of these things are as important as faith, and that none is complete without the other.

It is my sincere prayer that God will give you an open heart to weigh all the evidences presented in this article. I believe that enough has been said and the Word of God has been presented with clarity, so that those who want to see will be able to see the truth. From here I trust that the Word of God which has the power to touch and convict will work in your heart. I also trust that you will have the courage to do God’s will. †

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SALVATION

The Dichotomous Nature of Man

Michael L. King

Yes, “dichotomous” is a big word, but it also describes a huge gap in the life of man as he attempts to make the transition from mortal to immortal. The two-fold nature of man was introduced from the very beginning of time when God created man. Notice the dual nature of man as it unfolds: “*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*” (Genesis 2:7). God first formed the human body (mortal) and then breathed into him the God-part, life, both physical and spiritual. The King James Version reads, “...*and man became a living soul.*” These two are not mutually exclusive or in contradiction. When the mortal part of man is responded to properly and kept God-like, the transition can be made quite easily, but when yet another nature is added to the mix, namely ungodliness, the battle begins and the transition becomes conflicted. God cannot live in our mortal bodies if we are compromising our immortal souls (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

The Christian life should be “a preview of coming attractions”! It is the mortal that introduces us to the immortal. The battle cry of the child of God is “DEATH”, for it is therein that the swap is completely, permanently, and victoriously made (1 Corinthians 15:53-57). It is apparent that “*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 15:50), so other provisions must be made. This life is much like a race where the baton is handed off to another. Since we cannot travel into the heavenly realms with this “*earthen vessel*”, we must hand it off at the grave and place it in the hands of God. The first man is natural, but raised a spiritual body, bearing firstly an earthy image, but we shall eventually bear the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). The question that begs to be answered is whether we are ready for the “crossing over”?

Take a look at some contrasts between the mortal and immortal, which at the same time have some comparisons. Life as we know it in this world is beautiful. God’s creation of man and the world for man spared nothing

SALVATION

(Genesis 1:1), the virtues of which were extolled by David, “*For I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are your works*” (Psalm 139:14).

The world with all its beauty pales in comparison to what God has prepared for us in heaven (John 14:1-3). The daily care received from the hand of God in the form of sustenance: daily bread, clothes, and drink (Matthew 6:11, 30-32; 7:9-11), is surpassed by the Tree of Life in the midst of the paradise of God for those who do His commandments (Revelation 22:14).

Too much cannot be said about the special people by whom we are surrounded in this life: family, friends, and brethren (Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:21-27; 1 John 3:14). After basking in these relationships here, the transition entitles the faithful to be crowned with glory (2 Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 2:10).

We are privileged to indulge in all spiritual blessings here (Ephesians 1:3) and to have everything that pertains to life and godliness to help us prepare for moving to be with God (2 Peter 1:3). Upon our arrival, we will find waiting for us a place of beauty beyond finite description (Revelation 21:10).

As we pilot the turbulences of this mortal journey, there is guidance for each day even through the darkest of valleys as a shepherd would tend to his sheep (Psalm 23; John 10:3-18). Our great God continues His custodial care in heaven where He eliminates all sickness, suffering, sorrow, and separation (Revelation 21:4).

Mortal man is not without purpose when his life is lived to satisfy a spiritual end by seeking that which is above (Colossians 3:1; Philippians 3:13,14). It is exciting to know that God’s goodness toward us does not end with the mortal, but that there is hope for life beyond death (1 Corinthians 15:53), and that the mortal is merely a means of conveyance to our real destination — heaven. What anticipation the family member of God has by having a place of eternal rest (Hebrews 4:9). All of that for which we have lived in this mortal existence becomes a reality, for “*blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*” (Revelation 14:13), for they shall hear, “*Enter into the joy of your Lord*” (Matthew 25:21).

Keep in mind that all that we have discussed is ours for the choosing. The warm invitation of our Lord has been generously extended to “*come unto me*” (Matthew 11:28-30). So, it behooves us to prepare the mortal for an immortal reception, for “*...the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come’ and let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely*” (Revelation 22:17). †

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SALVATION

Have You Been Cheated?

Jim Faughn

“You cheater!!!”

Most of us have heard those words. Whether they are heard on an elementary school playground or in a boardroom of some large corporation, they are usually spoken (yelled) in anger. We’ve probably all seen an old western movie where a fight (maybe even a gunfight) broke out, when somebody thought he had been cheated in a card game. We don’t usually “take kindly” to being cheated.

Did you know that the Bible warns us about being cheated? Consider the New King James translation of Colossians 2:8: *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”*

How about that? We can be cheated in the most important aspect of our lives — our relationship with God! Interestingly enough, this “cheating” can be accomplished by what we are or are not taught.

Surely that must be why Paul made the following statements about

his teaching to the elders from Ephesus:

“...I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you...” (Acts 20:20).

“...I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

Paul’s claim in Acts 20:26 that he was *“...pure from the blood of all men,”* is another way of saying that he could not be successfully charged with cheating people out of anything they needed to know in order to please God.

Those of us who teach need to be aware of the terrific responsibility that is ours. It most certainly would not be good to be seen as a cheater in this area of our lives.

However, the responsibility is a “two-way street”. Look at Colossians 2:8 again. Those who are receiving the teaching are being alerted to the danger of being cheated.

Are you being cheated? Are you sure? †

Jim Faughn is the preacher for the Central congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

SALVATION

Waiting Too Long

Hershel Dyer

An eagle was once seen standing on a cake of ice, feasting upon some creature that had evidently fallen into the river. As the eagle got nearer the great Niagara Falls, observers watched while he looked up occasionally as if to say that he knew the dangerous falls were just ahead. However, he continued eating until he was very close to the edge of the roaring precipice. He then shrieked and flapped his wings, trying to fly. By this time his feet had become frozen to the icy carcass and over the falls he plummeted to his death.

Recently, I went by the home of a man who has not been faithful to the Lord for some time now. I urged him, as I have before, to get his life right with God. Having passed the “*three-score and ten*”, his day of life must soon see its sunset. He gave me his word that “within a month” he would do what he knew he should, regarding his soul. Knowing something of his prodigal ways, I cannot but wonder if he is going to wait too long. In spite of his good intentions, if this they be, he just may wait until divine patience



has been exhausted and the falls of divine wrath have claimed him!

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12,13). †

Hershel Dyer is a Gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 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 as 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.

Concerning the kingdom of God, amongst other things, Paul must have

THE CHURCH

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 Christ 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 had 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, ever since Paul had become a Christian, he had dedicated his entire life to the preaching of the kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? 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). †

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THE CHURCH

Our Greatest Need

Dalton Key

These are strange and troubling times! When well over one billion people prefer Mohammed to Jesus Christ, when many of us know more about baseball than about the Bible and seem to care more about current affairs than about Christ, when this world's self-proclaimed free-thinkers dismiss the virgin birth of Christ and His resurrection from the dead as "unreasonable" and "unscientific" while seriously considering such new-age nonsense as reincarnation and communication with the dead — yes, and with good being painted all around us as bad and bad as good — who can deny that these, indeed, are strange days?

What will it take to turn things around? What will bring back the balance, the stability, the sanity so desperately needed in a world gone awry?

What our world needs, yea, what we *all* need, is more of Christ and a more ardent determination to follow His example.

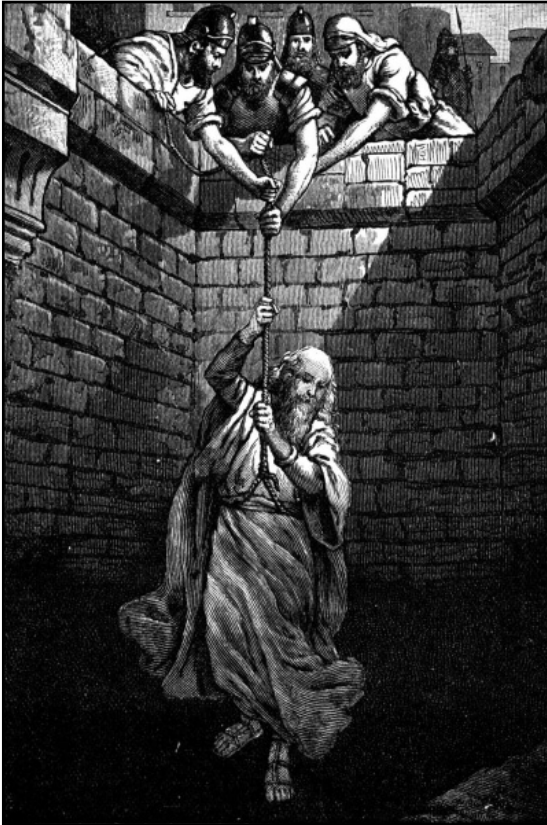
John Banister once wrote a brief yet powerful article under the heading, "Our Greatest Need." Read carefully: "Congregations today need: Not great plans and programs, but more of Christ! Not more up-to-date schemes and gimmicks, but more of Christ! Not more business meetings, but more of Christ! Not more highly educated preachers, but more of Christ! Not a more pleasing image, but more of Christ! Not a more elite and socially-minded people, but more of Christ! Not great numbers, but more of Christ!" Could Brother Banister have been any more on target?

Only in Jesus Christ, only by drinking deeply of His Word, and thus of His mind, will we find the direction, the perspective, and the insight needed to make sense of a seemingly senseless age. The world is crying — dying — for moral and spiritual leadership. †

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Even When It Hurts

Bobby Wheat



“I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him,...’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire...; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not” (Jeremiah 20:9).

We call Jeremiah the “weeping prophet” for good reason. In his lifetime, there was much to weep about. Unfaithfulness and immorality were rampant. Social injustice was so common as to pass without notice. The fabric of society, once strongly knit by obedience to God and love for Him and His law, was rapidly unraveling. Jerusalem was no longer the beautiful place it once had been; God

didn’t live there any more. In addition, the Babylonians were knocking at the gate, soon to come in and destroy everything in sight.

Jeremiah’s problems were compounded by the “double bind” of his existence. He was a prophet of God. He was compelled to tell people, especially the leaders of Judah, that punishment was coming because their lives were not godly. But the people didn’t want to hear; they were convinced that, since God

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

had rescued them in the past, they would be saved once again. They argued that because the Temple of the Lord was in their midst, their righteousness was assured and, therefore, God would not allow them to be destroyed (Jeremiah 7). Then when Jeremiah told them the truth, they threw him in prison and threatened his life.

As teachers of God's Word, sometimes we face the same kind of situation. We expect the opposition that comes from "outside the city". What will make it difficult to keep teaching is the opposition from those who think they are secure, that they know everything, yet who actually know nothing and are in danger of losing their souls. There are people today, even in the church, who do not want anyone speaking out about sin and judgment, and they will oppose and persecute any who do speak.

Here are two warnings which come to us from Jeremiah's situation. First, as listeners, as those who live "in the city", let us not mislead ourselves into thinking that we have obtained a kind of righteousness that can never be lost. A person's past entry into the kingdom does not make sinful behavior into something good. Let us listen to the teaching and warnings of the "prophets" — those who speak God's Word and call us to turn from sin — and let us not hinder them in their work.

Second, as teachers of God's Word (and all of us should be!), let us know the "fire" of God's Word that cannot be shut out or held back. Let us speak out against sin, even against doctrinal error, where we find it, even if our own brethren, our own families, oppose us. To be sure, we must speak the truth "*in love*" (Ephesians 4:15), but we must speak, even when it hurts. †

Bobby Wheat preaches for the Lord's church in Winfield, Kansas, USA.

Unfaithfulness and immorality are rampant. Social injustice is so common as to pass without notice. The fabric of society, once strongly knit by obedience to God and love for Him and His law, is rapidly unraveling. America is no longer the beautiful place it once was: a time will come, maybe soon, when God will not live there any more. In addition, the _____* are knocking at the gate, soon to come in and destroy everything in sight.

(* *Fill in the Blank*)

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

No Other Doctrine

Owen D. Olbricht

Paul wrote to Timothy that he had left him in Ephesus so that he could “charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3). He followed this letter with another in which he wrote, “And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Positively, Timothy was to teach others what he had learned from Paul and, negatively, he was to charge others to teach no other doctrine.

Paul and Perverse Teaching

Paul had been with the Ephesian elders on his third missionary journey. These were the leaders of the congregation with which he had left Timothy. He had told these elders when he was with them, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29,30).

If we want salvation, we must hear Jesus (Matthew 17:5) and obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). We must be sure that we do not believe or teach any other doctrine than that which has come through Him.

Later, in his first letter to Timothy, he wrote, “Now the spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the

faith” (1 Timothy 4:1). In his second letter, Paul wrote concerning people who would not want to hear sound teaching, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ... they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

On Paul’s first missionary journey, Sergius Paulus called for him and Barnabas so that he could hear the Word of God. When Elymas opposed the preaching of the Gospel, Paul said to him, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10). Paul was concerned that leaders in the church would

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

teach things that were contrary to Jesus' message.

Why No Other Teaching

Eternal life will be given to those who follow God's Word, as taught by Jesus (John 12:49,50). On the other hand, those who follow false doctrines will be damned (2 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Peter 2:1,2).

In order to be free from sin and be purified, we must follow the truth that has been revealed by the Lord (John 8:31,32; 1 Peter 1:22) through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). Jesus is full of truth (John 1:14); truth came through Him (John 1:17), and He is the truth; thus no one comes to the Father except by Him (John 14:6).

If we want salvation, we must hear Jesus (Matthew 17:5) and obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). We must be sure that we do not believe or teach any other doctrine than that which has come through Him. †

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



When Elymas opposed the preaching of the Gospel, Paul said to him, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10).

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16).

Authority

Joe C. Magee

Authority is given, assumed, or seized. When we elect a man to political office, we give him the authority to represent us in governmental affairs. Where no authority is given, sometimes it is assumed. The book of Judges is one example. The book closes with, *“Every man did what was right in his own eyes.”* Often in times of political upheaval, authority is seized. One example of this is Castro’s seizure



of the Cuban government.

Authority is always present in one form or another. There are those, however, who insist that there is no real authority. This is more prevalent in the realm of religion than in any other. Where did they get the authority to say, *“There is no authority”*?

When I drive down the streets and highways, I see numerous examples of those who seem to have no regard for authority. They will ignore the speed limits, pass in no-passing zones, fail to stop at stop signs, etc., often endangering the lives of themselves and others. I cannot help but wonder, *“What do these people think about authority?”* When I see these attitudes obviously displayed, I am not surprised that there are so many different ideas in matters of religion.

The most prevailing attribute of the entire Bible is authority. When God placed Adam and Eve in Eden, He established His authority. When they

disobeyed, He drove them from the garden by His authority. By God’s authority, Noah built the ark according to the instructions given. By His authority, man was destroyed in the great flood, with the exception of eight souls. As time progressed, God chose a man from Ur of the Chaldees to put into motion a plan that

would change the course of history. Abraham, recognizing and honoring that authority, separated himself from his homeland and went into a land about which he knew nothing; but he honored God because he believed. He accepted God’s authority.

Later in history, we find God es-

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

tablishing His authority over the Pharaoh of Egypt through the power given to Moses. This great leader reluctantly accepted his role in history, but he never questioned God's authority. His role was such that we refer to the "Law of Moses", which was actually *the law of God* proclaimed by *Moses*.

Jesus lived and died under the Law of Moses. His life was the perfect example of honoring the authority of God: "*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*" (Hebrews 5:8). Even in the face of great temptation, He could say without hesitation, "*It is written.*" Continuing the thought in Hebrews, "*And having been perfected He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Hebrews 5:9).

When Jesus went to the cross, it was by the authority mingled in the shedding of innocent blood that we might have hope. Upon the resurrection of Christ and before His ascension to His throne, He gave the "Great Commission", which begins with, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matthew 28:18).

Men can speak of the love of Jesus — as well they should — but until they recognize, accept, and honor His authority, they should not speak of their love for Jesus. †

"And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes ... And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" (Mark 1:21,22).

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'
Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8,9).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

If space were available in this writing, I would copy the entire 4th chapter of Ephesians for our reading. Paul writes with tremendous feeling about God's desire for the church. From the very outset, he mentions that God's will is for "*unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*". However, to secure such unity, as he illustrates, we cannot be as children who are tossed around, and car-



SPEAKING THE TRUTH (IN LOVE)

Shan Jackson

ried about with every wind of doctrine. Thus, a Christian who is striving for such unity must not be as immature children, but develop spiritual maturity.

One mark of spiritual maturity is doctrinal stability. Without a mature firmness, we are apt to be fickle in our convictions. However, with the steadfastness imparted by edification, our faith is stabilized. Unlike children, who are forever changing their minds, we must be grounded and strong in our faith. Note, however, that this stability is not mere stubbornness, and certainly no comfort is given to the relativist who refuses to change his mind because he feels it does not matter what one believes. No, the premise in Ephesians 4 is

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

clear: (1) there is such a thing as truth, (2) truth can be understood, and (3) having been understood, truth must be securely held and applied.

Truth is essentially important. Whether we understand truth and practice it or not, truth is the critical matter. In contrast to the prevailing philosophy of our age, which often explains away truth as subjective, the New Testament consistently maintains the reality and integrity of truth. Jesus taught that we CAN know the truth and the truth SHALL make us free (John 8:32). Individuals who do not receive the love of the truth will be lost forever (2 Thessalonians 2:10). It is simply a fact that truth is the only ground upon which fellowship with God may be enjoyed.

We must speak the truth.
However, we must speak the truth
in a manner consistent with Christ.

Furthermore, it is not just for those outside of God's fellowship that truth is important. Even after a relationship with Christ has been established, we can lose that connection if we abandon the truth. John writes unequivocally that anyone who transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ – does not have God (2 John 9). Clearly, truth matters far more than man sometimes supposes.

However, standing firm for the importance of the truth is not all that matters either. When it comes to the Gospel, we must communicate the truth, to believers and unbelievers, within the context, as Paul says, of love. We must love the truth and present it in that way. “...*but speaking the truth in love, many grow up into him in all things*” (verse 15).

As illogical as it might sound, the truth can be wielded unethically and uncharitably. Paul writes, “*The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*” (2 Timothy 2:24,25).

Brethren, may we take God's admonition and apply it to our lives. We must speak the truth. However, we must speak the truth in a manner consistent with Christ. †

Shan Jackson preaches for the Lord's church in Port Lavaca, Texas, USA.

YEAST SPREADS

Rick Cunningham

“Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?” (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Yeast is a single-celled fungus that lives on sugary solutions and ferments sugars to form alcohol and carbon dioxide. It is used in the leavening of breads, among other things.

Was Paul giving the Christians in Corinth a baking lesson when he wrote about yeast? No. The lesson in its context is about sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-12). Corinth was proud of its acceptance of a man who was living immorally with his father’s wife. Paul was rebuking them for their attitude toward this man. They were giving tacit approval of his behavior, which would lead to more and more sins. Like yeast, this sin could affect the whole congregation.

Part of the work of the church is to promote holiness. Sins are to be repented of, not encouraged with tolerance. Private sins can be handled privately, but public sins, like this one in Corinth, must be addressed publicly so the church is not seen as giving tacit approval.

It strikes me that today there are

some who understand this principle and some who do not. Those who understand that “a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough” know that the Lord expects His people to be holy. However, congregations that teach tolerance of sins instead of repentance of sins are setting themselves up to become more and more sinful.

Yeast is abundant. It is found even in the air. Sin, too, is common among us. But our attitude toward sin will determine whether it is repented of, rendering it harmless, or is tolerated, making it spread...like yeast.

Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? †

Rick Cunningham is the preacher for the 14th and Main Church of Christ in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

“Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?”
(1 Corinthians 5:6).

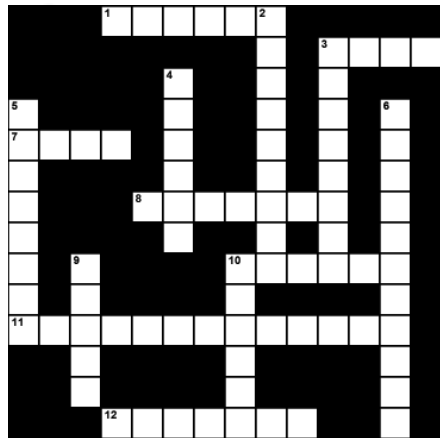
BIBLE FIND

Books of the
Old Testament

Bonnie Rushmore

Across

1. Name the book that records the account of three men in a fiery furnace.
3. Name one of the books that prophesies the coming of the church.
7. Name the book that describes the love between a mother and her daughter-in-law.
8. Name the last book of the Old Testament.
10. Name the only book that does not mention God but shows His providence.
11. Name the book written by the wisest man.
12. Name the first book of the Bible.



Down

2. Name a book of the Old Testament that outlines God's laws for the Israelites.
3. Name the book written by the weeping prophet.
4. Name one of the books that prophesies the coming of the church.
5. Name the book of the Old Testament that gives advice to young people on how to live a good life.
6. Name one of the books of the Old Testament that outlines God's laws for the Israelites.
9. Name the book that records the account of a man swallowed by a giant fish.
10. Name the book that describes the travels of the Israelites as they left Egypt.

Martha or Mary

Bonnie Rushmore

Are you a Martha or a Mary? Luke 10:38-42 records the account of Jesus visiting in the home of Martha. On this occasion, Martha was busy serving her guests while her sister Mary sat listening to Jesus. Martha went to Jesus complaining that she was doing all the work and requested that Jesus send Mary to help her. Instead of Jesus sending Mary to assist with the food preparations and serving, He gently rebuked Martha for her misplaced priorities. Jesus stated, "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:41,42). Martha was concerned with the physical while Mary was focused on the spiritual. Jesus commended Mary for her interest in spiritual matters and gently rebuked Martha for her focus on the physical aspects of life.

Other Bible passages show that Jesus Christ was interested in the physical well-being of humanity. There are numerous examples throughout the Gospel records of Jesus healing the sick and feeding the hungry (Matthew

8:1-4, 14,15; Luke 6:17-19; Mark 6:35-44; John 4:46-54; etc.). Many individuals believed on Jesus because of the miracles He performed (John 2:24). John 20:30,31 gives the reason Jesus performed these miraculous events, "*...that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*" Christ healed the sick and fed the hungry for the purpose of proving His deity. Jesus also gave power to the apostles to heal the sick and to cast out demons (Matthew 10:1,8). Furthermore, He taught that those who failed to help those in need were not his followers (Matthew 25:34-56).

Inspired instruction in the epistles mandates the need to care for the less fortunate. James says, "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*" (James 1:27). The word "visit" in this verse is more than stopping by to say, "Hi". Faithful Christians will care for orphans and widows as needs and opportunities arise.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Paul instructed Timothy on the care for widows in 1 Timothy 5:3-13. The church has the responsibility to care for older widows who have no family to care for them **and** if they have proven themselves to be faithful servants to God.

These are just a few examples in the New Testament of Christians helping those in need. However, every instance in the Bible of showing compassion on the less fortunate is a by-product of living a Christian life, **not** the purpose of our Christian life. Just as John recorded the purpose of Jesus' miracles (John 20:30,31; John 2:24), the purpose for our caring for others is to prove our love and concern for the spiritual soul as we provide for the physical body.

Jesus taught that He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Before His Ascension to heaven, the instruction Christ gave the apostles was to make disciples (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16), using miraculous power to confirm the Word (Mark 16:20). Caring for the physical body was not their purpose for reaching out to others; their mission was to teach the lost the way of salvation. Feeding the hungry and healing the sick were by-products of their job on this earth.

The mission Jesus gave the apostles carries forward to all Christians (past, present and future, 2 Timothy 2:2). Our first priority is to seek and

save the lost. We need to be more concerned with lost souls than with caring for the physical body.

Benevolence and evangelism can go hand in hand. However, we need to guard our attitude and ensure that we are more concerned with the lost, spiritual soul than caring for the immediate physical needs of orphans, the hungry, the homeless and the devastation caused by natural disasters. Martha was concerned (rightly so) with feeding the physical body. Mary was interested in feeding the spiritual body. There is a place for both as the Christian serves God. I encourage all Christians to examine themselves in this matter. Are you more concerned with the picture of the dirty, hungry child who if died tomorrow would be in Abraham's bosom than with the adult whose soul is destined for an eternity in hell if we fail to give him spiritual food to save his soul? Are you a Martha or a Mary? †

Bonnie Rushmore lives and works in the World Evangelism office in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

*“For the poor
always ye have with
you; but me ye
have not always”
(John 12:8).*

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

**EQUIPPED FOR
WORK OF MINISTRY**

Wayne Barrier

The mission of the church to go into all the world to every person with the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15,16) is an enormous task that is not being done today. Each month millions of people die across the world that have never heard the message of salvation. Why is the church failing to do this work? There are numerous reasons that could be given, but one that is probably near the top of the list is that we are not equipped for such a task. How can we change the situation? Consider the concepts taught in Ephesians 4:11-16 which states,

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles,
some prophets,
some evangelists,
and some pastors and teachers
for the equipping of the saints
for the work of ministry
for the edifying of the body of Christ;
till we all come to the unity of the faith
and of the knowledge of the son of God,
to a perfect man,
to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
that we should no longer be children,
tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by
the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,
but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him
who is the Head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit
together by what every joint supplies,
according to the effective working
by which every part does its share,
causes growth of the body for edifying of itself in love.”*

This passage teaches that every Christian should be involved in a “work of ministry” that will consequently strengthen, edify, and cause growth of the

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

church. Obviously, this is not simply referring to the ministry of preaching. Many Christians cannot preach. Work of ministry is referring to any activity (work) selected by individual Christians as a means of teaching the Gospel to others. We have different strengths, qualities, attributes, and opportunities. Each should learn to maximize his or her personal effectiveness in a chosen area of work.

Why has this not happened? If every Christian were productively involved in a “work of ministry”, it is likely that the Gospel would be taught to every person in the world today. The Scripture says that saints are to be equipped for this work. Equipping is to be done by preachers, elders, and teachers. Equipping comes as a result of knowing what the apostles and prophets taught. Brethren are not being equipped properly, and they are not effective in their work of ministry. We should examine our efforts to follow this simple, biblical model and adjust as needed. Within every congregation, there should be a serious, continuous, Bible-based process of equipping every member for his or her work. If this is done, the church will be edified and will grow. †

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

Christian Responsibilities to Other Christians

- Love (1 Peter 1:22)
- Edify (Ephesians 4:16)
- Encourage (Hebrews 10:24)
- Teach and Admonish (Colossians 3:16)
 - Bear Burdens (Galatians 6:2)
 - Comfort (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Forgive (Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:14,15)
 - Work Together (Philippians 1:27)

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Silently Suffering

Ronny Crocker

Today when one of our members has a heart attack or stroke, we publish it in our bulletin for prayers. In our Sunday services, we spread the word to pray for someone diagnosed with cancer. On Wednesday nights, we update the congregation and more prayers are offered. In situations like these, it is great to see the church spring into action with visits, support, and even financial help (“...if one member suffers, all the members suffer...” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

However, there are prayers that never make it to our pulpits. For some members, their situation is too shameful to share with the church. These brothers and sisters in Christ have been silently suffering for months and even years. They assemble with us every Sunday for worship; however, we never hear their cries.

As the director of an addiction recovery program carried out by the City Boulevard church of Christ, I have been receiving calls from Christians around the country. I have been hearing the cries of mothers, grandmothers, brothers, and sisters of drug addicts and alcoholics. For years they have been privately praying for answers and secretly searching for solutions. It is sad to see these brethren silently suffering alone from the fallout of addiction.

On occasion, I will speak about drug and alcohol addiction for various churches of Christ. Almost every time, at the end, a church member will stealthily approach me in tears to talk about what they are too ashamed to share with the church.

Brethren, please be aware of the soul sitting next to you on Sunday morning. He or she may be silently suffering over an addicted love one. Please refer him or her to our web page (www.projectrescue.org). Please set up an appointment for me to speak to your congregation about drug and alcohol addiction within the Lord’s church! This is a way for you to “fulfill the law of Christ”.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:1,2).

“...if one member suffers, all the members suffer...” (1 Corinthians 12:26). †

Ronnie Crocker works with Project Rescue Addiction Recovery in Waycross, Georgia, USA.

IN HIS MEMORY

Roger Johnson

Our nation pauses annually to pay special tribute to armed forces personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Appreciation is expressed in civil and religious ceremonies from a grateful people. A national holiday, Memorial Day, is observed. Graves are decorated with beautiful floral tributes; tears are shed by loved ones who are left behind; memories of the deceased flood the mind.

We have erected several notable monuments to the memory of individuals and events that have special significance to us. The Lincoln Memorial was built as a tribute to one of our great presidents, Abraham Lincoln. Mount Rushmore was carved out of a stone mountain and features the facial profile of four men who made unique contributions to our nation. The Arc of Triumph in Paris, France was constructed to commemorate the victory of French forces over their enemy. These memorials were erected because the individual or event they commemorate left an indelible impression upon man's history.

There are memorials mentioned

in the Bible as well. The rainbow in the sky constantly reminds man of God's promise that He will never destroy the world by water again (Genesis 9:11-16). The Passover Feast was an annual reminder to Israel of God delivering them from Egyptian slavery during the days of Moses (Exodus 12). Twelve stones were taken from the middle of the Jordan River from which a memorial was erected to commemorate Israel's crossing the river on dry ground (Joshua 4). If future generations should ask, "What do these stones mean to you?" the memorial would provide an opportunity to discuss God's deliverance of Israel.

The memorial that exceeds all others in its significance and importance is the Lord's Supper. It was established by Jesus on the night of his betrayal while he met with the apostles in an upper room in Jerusalem. *"And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it; and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, 'This*

WORSHIP

is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:22-25, ESV).



Various names are given to this memorial in the Scriptures. Paul uses the term *“Lord’s Supper”* in 1 Corinthians 11:20, affirming that, indeed, the Lord himself is the host of this event. He also called it the *“Lord’s Table”* (1 Corinthians 10:21), not referring to the physical structure that held the utensils, but to the elements served at the occasion. *“Communion”* (1 Corinthians 10:16) suggests

intimacy; a time in which we share in the fellowship of Christ and one another. The *“breaking of bread”* (Acts 2:42) is a figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole. Sometimes this expression refers to a common meal, while at other times it refers to the Lord’s Supper. In Acts 20 we see an example in which the same expression refers to both. Verse 7 is a reference to the Lord’s Supper while verse 11 relates to the common meal. Several religious institutions use terms not found in the Bible to describe this event, such as Eucharist, Mass, and Sacrament.

When Jesus instituted the Supper, He blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, *“Take, eat; this is my body”* (Matthew 26:26). *“In like manner, He gave thanks for the cup and instructed the disciples, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’”* (Matthew 26:27,28). It is obvious that Jesus was referring to the elements as representatives of His body and blood. There is nothing in Scripture to indicate that these elements turned into the actual body and blood of the Lord.

It was unleavened bread (Matthew 26:17) and fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:29) that was used when Jesus instituted the Supper. It would

WORSHIP

be sinful for us to use such items as meat and soft drinks at the Lord's Table. **They are not authorized.**

This is the Lord's memorial in commemoration of his death in behalf of fallen man. Jesus said, "*Do this in remembrance of me*" (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). Some find it difficult during this quiet moment to focus on Jesus' death. Some read the Bible; others read the words of an appropriate song; still others sit in quiet meditation as they reflect upon the Lord's sacrificial death.

A few years ago, Levi Sides shared a suggestion that has helped me keep my mind focused on the Lord's death during the communion: Seven things are associated with the crucifixion which are worthy of consideration:

1. There was one Lord who was nailed to the cross.
2. Two thieves were crucified on either side of Jesus.
3. There were three crosses on Calvary.
4. Jesus suffered four wounds.
5. Five pieces of clothing were divided among the soldiers (John 19:23).
6. There were six hours of darkness.
7. Jesus uttered seven sayings from the cross.

Giving attention to these seven items might assist in keeping the mind focused during communion.

There are numerous practices among religious groups as to the time when communion is observed. Some serve the Supper monthly; others observe it quarterly, semiannually, or annually. Some partake of the communion on days of the week other than Sunday.

The apostle Paul stated that the Lord's Supper was to be observed often until Jesus comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). From this statement we learn that it is to be regularly and perpetually observed until the end of time. However, we don't know how often "often" is until we read the example of brethren in the first century who met on the first day of every week to "break bread" in their worship of God (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). This practice was not just a cultural circumstance, but was a directive of God through the apostles.

It was on the first day of the week that Jesus was resurrected (John 20:1). It was on that day that He met with His disciples after the resurrection (John 20:19,26). Pentecost was the day on which the church of our Lord was established and was always on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:15,16). Regular observance of the Lord's Supper was maintained by the Jerusalem church which was un-

WORSHIP

der the direct tutelage of the apostles (Acts 2:42).

Christians of today have no authority, nor are we under any obligation, to meet at any other time to partake of the Lord's Supper. The person who partakes of the communion in an unworthy manner is guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27). While partaking of the Lord's Supper, we are encouraged to take a backward look (1 Corinthians 11:24,25). We should reflect on the Lord's sacrificial death.

We should also take a forward look (1 Corinthians 11:26). It is one way in which we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. It is an affirmation of our conviction that He not only died for our sins, but that He is coming again to judge the world. At the time of communion we should also take an inward look (1 Corinthians 11:28). It is a time for self-examination and self-evaluation.

At the Lord's Supper, we have the opportunity of taking an outward look also (1 Corinthians 10:16). It isn't that we look around us and take note of people's dress and conduct, but it is a time in which we have communion with the Lord and our brothers and sisters.

What a privilege Christians have in partaking of the Lord's Supper! It is a memorial unlike anything man has ever known, being far superior

to all others. It is a memorial that is not tied to one place, but is universal. It is not elaborate or spectacular, but simple and lasting. It is not cold like stone, but warm and intimate. The memorials erected by men pass away with time. They rust, corrode, or are destroyed in some fashion. The Lord's Memorial — though seeming to be perishable and insignificant in its elements — has continued week after week for almost two thousand years! Every Christian should eagerly anticipate the opportunity of partaking of it in memory of Him who died to redeem us from our sins. †

Roger Johnson lives and works in Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

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of the Lord's
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WORSHIP

THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING

Keith Parker

Last Sunday, I was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Today I'm in Yucaipa, California. The two trips have been for preaching. I am preaching the Gospel. What a waste of time!

Surely there's a better use of my time than preaching. Preaching is too ol' fashioned. Out of date. Out of style. It no longer reaches the masses. It certainly doesn't appeal to our young people. It's no longer a crowd-pleaser. Maybe Grandma liked it, but get real. This is the 21st century. We need something that's up-to-date. Positive and pleasant. Something that will bring multitudes to our church building.

Maybe a picnic. Or, a tractor-pull. Or, a car show. Perhaps a ping-pong tournament or a basketball game. On second thought, we could really get creative and have a carnival or a circus or a beauty pageant. If that sounds too weird or bizarre, we could always go back to a clothing or food giveaway. Anything that would reach people. Anything but preaching.

Oh, I know that Jesus said He came to preach (Mark 1:38). Yes, I know that Paul said he was eager to preach the Gospel (Romans 1:15), because it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), and I know that God chose preaching to bring His Word to light (Titus 1:3). I know that through preaching, people are saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). I know that Timothy was told to "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). You know — that was first-century stuff. Preaching was effective in earlier days. However, preaching no longer works.

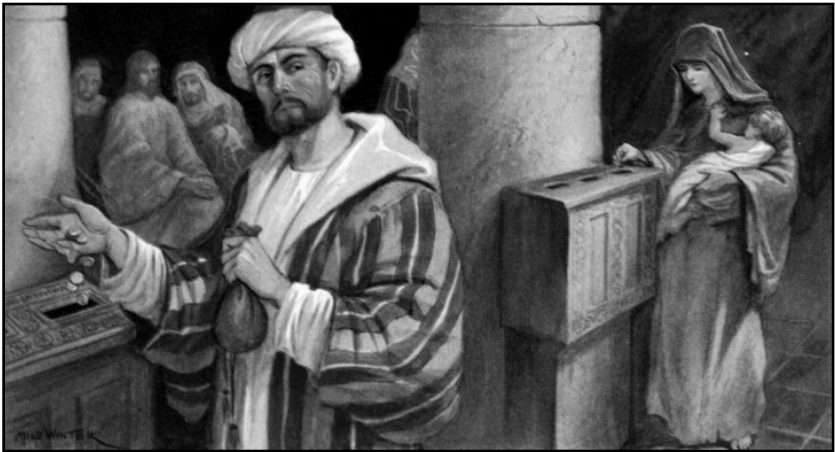
So, let's try skits, drama, comedy, poetry, luncheons, seminars, giveaways, workshops — anything but preaching.

In Baton Rouge there were over 25 public responses to the preached Word. Some came to be baptized. Others came to be restored. Some came requesting prayer. What a waste! †

Keith Parker preaches for the church of Christ in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.

Why Do People Give?

Jerry A. Jenkins



Many people give because it is the positive or ethical thing to do. Some give for self-centered motives, while others are motivated by an unselfish concern for the welfare of others. The former will give if their names appear in print on a program, in a church bulletin, or if there is some public recognition of their gifts. Such givers lessen their own pain rather than the suffering of others. Generally, these are not those who

put money in the collection plate each Sunday, but give on some special occasion to make a “bigger splash”.

According to research, many seek the economic benefits offered by a donation. These benefits include tax advantages, or in some manner enhancing career prospects. Often this motivation includes public recognition, expecting a return gesture, the satisfaction of showing gratitude for one’s own well-being, self-esteem,

WORSHIP

feeling good about oneself, and relief from a sense of guilt and obligation.

Those motivated by altruism, or the unselfish concern for the welfare of others, understand and share the feelings of others, and there is a desire to lessen the stress of the victim. The reward of this type of gift is the satisfaction of knowing that the right and good thing has been done.

Some people who have had income decide not to give when the collection plate comes by them. Why do some decide not to give? Actually, there is little understanding of why people fail to donate. Studies that include a look at non-givers identify several barriers to giving. Some simply do not trust how the funds are used. Some may even find distaste in the way the funds are used, or they may not have sufficient information concerning the expenditures. The church needs to help boost trust through greater transparency and accountability.

Some do not give because they feel pressured to give. God does exert pressure on His children to give sacrificially, but He will not force us to give. He commands that on the first day of every week those who have income are to give a portion in order that His work might be done (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

Other negative attitudes toward putting money in the collection plate

each Sunday include: (1) Denial of responsibility. Some argue that they are not personally responsible to help in the work of God because "I do not have enough money to give." (2) Denial of the need. "All that I have given has not made any difference and I see no need to continue" is this attitude. (3) Appeal to higher loyalties, "My priority is looking after my family. Charity begins at home."

Let me appeal to each reader to think through the excuses for not giving and correctly consider the joyful life of being a giver. †

Jerry A. Jenkins has preached for many years for the Roebuck Parkway church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

**So let each
one give as he
purposes in
his heart, not
grudgingly
or of
necessity; for
God loves
a cheerful
giver.
(2 Corinthians 9:7)**

Aquila, Priscilla, and Epaphroditus Had Real Christian Love

Maxie B. Boren

So many professed Christians have a very shallow concept of the biblical teaching to “*love one another*”. Oftentimes, love is expressed or demonstrated in no more than superficial fashion, maybe in a trite way, with less than sincere verbalization of “I love you”, or with a halfhearted handshake.

But may we all note what the Savior enjoined upon us: “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:34,35, NKJV, emphasis added).

It is my considered judgment that if brethren really loved each other to the extent Jesus taught us, many of the petty ills that are plaguing the church today would dissipate. But regretfully, there is far too much selfishness, stubbornness, callousness, bitterness, envy, and suspicion among brethren, often resulting in ruptured relationships, dissension, and even division. Please read again what Jesus said to His disciples as quoted above. Then, look with me at the teaching of the apostle John in 1 John 3:14, where he gave Christians assurance of their spiritual life, based on their genuine love for one another... “*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*” But on the other hand... “*He who does not love his brother abides in death.*” It is just that simple. To love our brethren deeply and sincerely is one of the proofs that our lives are right with God. But if we don’t love our brethren as we ought, we still abide in spiritual death!

Continuing, in verse 16, John reveals the depth of love of which he writes: “*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.*” Yes, the greatest demonstrative example of pure, genuine, unselfish love the world has ever seen, or ever will see, was the sacrifice Jesus made in giving Himself as a sin-offering for all mankind (read Hebrews 7:26,27; 9:24-26; 10:10-12; Co-

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Iossians 1:14,19,20; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:24). John draws a conclusion for Christians from noting the degree of Christ's love for us, by penning: "*And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*"

It is my considered judgment that if brethren really loved each other to the extent Jesus taught us, many of the petty ills that are plaguing the church today would dissipate.

Do we have record of early Christians who obviously were profoundly touched by Jesus' sacrifice, and who took to heart the instructions of John? Most assuredly so! When the apostle Paul wrote to the saints of God in the city of Rome, he said, "*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life...*" (Romans 16:3,4). The Scriptures do not inform us of exactly what they did, but it is apparent that in some way they jeopardized their own lives in order to rescue Paul from peril. In doing so, Aquila and Priscilla reflected the example of Jesus, and manifested the degree of love He taught us to have, by instruction and example (cf. John 15:13; Romans 5:6-8).

Still another man of such love was the Christian named Epaphroditus, to whom the apostle refers in Philippians 2:25-30. Paul speaks of him as a fellow worker and fellow soldier, who "*for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me*" (verse 30). From this we infer that, at great risk and hazard to himself, Epaphroditus attended to the needs of the apostle when it was not feasible for Christians in Philippi to do so.

Oh, that we today could imbibe the true meaning of the love of Christ into our hearts! As Peter wrote, "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently*" (1 Peter 1:22, ASV)! Paul also penned the following: "*In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another...*" (Romans 12:10), as well as: "*and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing*" (1 Corinthians 13:3, NKJV). Thus, "*Let all that you do be done with [in] love*" (1 Corinthians 16:14). †

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher living in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

Difficulties Are Part of Normal Existence

Ronald D. Bryant



Life is not a bed of roses. You can do all that you know is right and seek to be all that you are supposed to be, and still life will have its difficulties. Some troubles come because of the choices that others make, or have made. Some troubles come as a consequence of choices that we make, or have made in the past. Some troubles

come to us simply as a result of our residence in an imperfect world. There are also troubles within. Sometimes we are angry, or worried, or fearful, or depressed, or struggling with a weakness. Our points of difficulty may differ, and our stress levels may vary, yet they are common to us all.

God is not the author of difficulties, but He does allow His children to experience them. Why? Among the answers that can be given, there is one that is paramount: We tend to think that we are in charge and are self-sufficient. Yet, it is only when we come face to face with our need and our poverty that we will lay aside our mask of self-sufficiency, and give ourselves to seeking that One who gives “*life and breath and all things*” (Acts 17:25).

It is well to remember that the Christian life consists not in problem-free living, but in learning to live effectively with the upsets of life, the difficulties of life, with our own weaknesses, and with our own unwise choices. It consists of living with a strong sense of identity and a clear and strong sense of purpose. The Christian’s identity consists of a relationship with God that is bound up in the strength of God, and an awareness that He reigns supreme. The Christian’s purpose consists of seeking to face life with but one agenda — to know and honor the Lord, no matter the circumstance, no matter the difficulty. †

Ronald D. Bryant preaches for the Central Church of Christ in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.



Do I *Have* to “Go to Church”?

Steve Higginbotham

Have you ever had questions like that asked of you? Through the years, I have often had people ask the question, “Do I have to go to all the services of the church? I mean, what if I do not go on Sunday night or Wednesday night? Do I have to go at those times if I faithfully go Sunday morning?”

Well, allow me to answer that question with a few questions of my own.

- Do you have to hug and kiss your little children?
- Do you have to remember your wife’s birthday?
- Do you have to call home when you are late coming home from work?
- Do you have to buy presents for your family?
- Do you have to attend ballgames and band functions in which your children are involved?
- Do you have to attend the funeral of a close friend or loved one?
- Do you have to say, “I love you” when you love someone?

I think you see the point. Sometimes we are guilty of asking the wrong questions. There are some things in life that we do not “**have**” to do, but we “**get**” to do. In fact, even asking the question, “Do I *have* to...?” is terribly inappropriate.

When my relationship with my God is based on what I “have” to do and what I don’t “have” to do, then I had better take a long hard look at that relationship. †

Steve Higginbotham preaches for the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

The Fair Woman Without Discretion

Ken Tyler

Proverbs 11:22 is a very striking passage. Listen to Solomon, “*As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.*” It’s just not appropriate for a pig to have a jewel of gold in his snout. A pig is filthy; he loves to wallow in the mire. Gold is precious and of great value. No one would ever think of putting a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout.

Now, the same is true of a fair woman who is without discretion. Webster defines discretion as “being careful about what one does and says.” It’s so sad to see a woman who is beautiful, but who doesn’t care what she does or says.

Let me give you some examples of what I mean: (1) A fair woman who talks with a filthy mouth; (2) A fair woman with a glass of alcohol in her hand; (3) A fair woman who sleeps with any and every man and doesn’t think anything about having an abortion; (4) A fair woman who poses for pornographic magazines and movies.

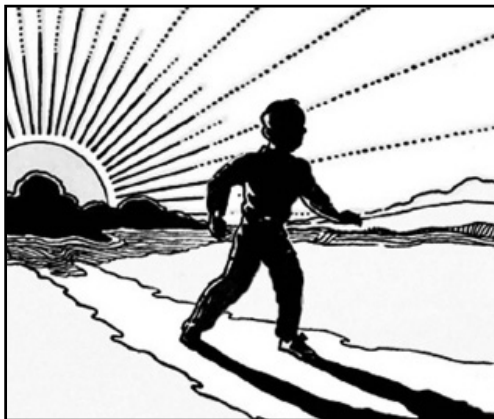
Yes, such a woman is like a jewel

of gold in a swine’s snout. Beauty and this kind of behavior do not go together. The fair woman without discretion is filthy and nasty. She is such a sad sight to see.

What kind of woman are you? Read 1 Peter 3:1-6 and notice the emphasis that is placed upon behavior. Such words as “*chaste*” and “*holy*” appear. Then study the “*virtuous woman*” of Proverbs 31. We are told that “*...her price is far above rubies*” (verse 10). Notice these statements about her, “*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her*” (verses 26-28).

May we all realize that a beautiful soul is the most beautiful thing in the world. Ladies, I pray you will adorn yourselves with such. †

Ken Tyler is the preacher for the Lord’s church in Arab, Alabama, USA.



Being an Example

J.C. Choate

You and I are examples. Each of us is setting examples for good or bad for those around us, whether we realize it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we accept that responsibility or not.

What is an example? It is a pattern, like a set of blueprints of one's life. Others can see our lives, they can hear our speech and watch our relationships. They can observe our attitudes and reactions to people and things. They will be impressed for good or bad by what they see and hear. Onlookers, then, will often be influenced to some degree to do as we are doing. When we think about it like that, we can see the great and eternal importance of the example we are setting.

If we are to be good patterns for others, we need a good example to follow ourselves. Again, the people closest to us are likely to influence us strongly. If our lives are to be worthwhile, we need to stay away from bad company, but who can we look to as a good pattern for our lives? To answer that question, if we are familiar with the Scriptures, we point to Jesus as being the best and greatest example of all, for me, for you, and for all people. The apostle Peter said, "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*" (1 Peter 2:21). Christ came from God, but was subjected to every temptation, even as we are, yet He did not sin. Speaking of Him, the Hebrew writer said, "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). Christ was godly, pure, unselfish, humble, patient, served his Father, and had love for all people.

At any time in our lives when we are not sure as to what we should do, it would be good to ask, "What would Jesus do?" If we will ask that question and then follow His example on that point, we will surely do the right thing.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

We call ourselves “Christians”. That name means “Christ-like”. According to 2 Corinthians 5:20, we live in this world as representatives of Christ: *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”*

If I sent someone on a mission, in my name, I would expect that person to talk, think, and behave as I would do in any given situation. If, instead, the person **lied** — in my name — **cheated** — in my name — and **behaved in ways that were in total contradiction to what I stood for**— all in my name — I would feel betrayed.

Our Lord has entrusted us with the wearing of His name, a name that has never been besmirched by sin or evil. Because we say we are following Him, we who are Christians should be the best examples of all. People are watching what we say and do, they weigh our attitudes toward themselves and others. This may very well determine how they will define Christianity. We may bring them to Christ, or we may drive them away, depending on the definition they see in us of “Christ-like”.

We may say that we are Christians, and we may be quick to preach to those around us, but they will be more influenced by the way we live than by what we say. The question is, are we practicing what we preach? Remember, we have a vast audience watching us every day. There are the people of the world, but also there are our friends, relatives, even our own children. What are their impressions of Christ in us? Do they see us as being honest and sincere, the Christians that we say we are?

Or do they see us as fakes, impostors, actors, pretenders? There are members of the church who never attend worship. Others do not bring their children to Bible Study, or study with them at home. Still others have money for themselves but never have anything for the Lord. If you are guilty of such things, do you think that your children will continue to have an interest in the Lord as they grow up, and will obey Him, and be faithful to Him? If you think so, you are sadly mistaken.

Such an example is a betrayal of the very name of Christ, and it will not lead people *to Him*, but *away from Him*. Think seriously about what you are doing and make the necessary corrections before it is too late for you and for those who are watching you. Paul said even to the young preacher, Timothy, *“Let no man despise thy youth but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12). He was saying that, even as a young man, and *especially* as a young believer,

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Timothy should so conduct his life that no one could find fault with him on the basis of his age. Paul mentioned specific areas to be concerned about, areas in which young people often have problems. He said that Timothy should be serious about handling the Lord's Word correctly, that he should guard his speech, that he should be aware of his manner of life in expressing his love, humility, and faith. Young men or women, with these positive qualities in their lives, can make a great impression for good on their young friends, and also on the older generations. Not only will such an example have a good influence on others, but also it will bring many rich rewards, even in this world.

We are blessed, as God's children, to wear His name. When Israel wore His name, God said of them that, "... *wherever they went, **they profaned My holy name** — when they said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.'*" Then He said, "... *I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I am hallowed in you before their eyes*" (Ezekiel 36:20,23).

We must remember that we have the same privilege and the same responsibility. There is no life like the Christian life. Christ said that He was the light of the world (John 8:12), but He also said of His disciples that they were lights of the world (Matthew 5:14). That is, they were to reflect the light of Christ, and they could do that only as they followed Him and His example.

Jesus illustrated the importance of one's light by saying they were like lights of a city set on a hill that could not be hidden. He also pointed out that the purpose of a candle is to give light, not that it should be put under something and hidden. Likewise, one becomes a Christian to show Christ is his life, not to hide Him by sin, improper attitudes, etc. Jesus then said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). One's good works are not for his own glory, but rather that others might see his life and know that it is the result of following Christ, to the honour and glory of the Lord Himself.

What kind of an example are you setting? Is it good or bad? It can be good if you will follow the greatest example of all, Jesus Christ. What better thing could you do in this world than to live the kind of life that will help to ensure eternal salvation for your friends and loved ones? †

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



How Do You Measure Up?

Matthew 12:33-37

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Training in Positives

Betty Burton Choate

*“Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).”*

There is nothing more precious in the home than the blending of the husband and wife, along with bits and pieces of grandparents and other relatives, into beautiful, intelligent, and charming children. God intended the home to be a place of warmth, security, and love. It is the parents' responsibility to carry out God's will.

Everybody needs hugs, words of approval and encouragement. Children, especially, being in their formative years, need this kind of relationship with both their mother and daddy. Let me make some suggestions:

1. Be a “hands on” parent. Yes, there will be times when your hands have to be used for punishment for misbehavior, but if your hands are used 99% of the time for hugs, approving pats, and accompanying kisses, you will be setting the positive tone for the basic relationship with your children. Don't neglect this vital ingredient.

2. Talk to your children, opening your thoughts to them so that they will learn by example to model their logic and conclusions after yours.

3. Be vocal about your approval of what they are saying or doing, but be balanced, as well. It is a mistake for parents to leave the impression that their children are the center of the world and that whatever they are doing is all-important. Self-focus is one of the great problems in society today, and it often begins in childhood.

However, lack of confidence grows out of absence of encouragement and approval. Even if a goal is not reached, applaud the effort, and look honestly with the child to see how a better effort can be made next time. In conversation with others, in your child's hearing, comment approvingly — though not boastfully — about things he has said or done. Something said *about* one in one's hearing often carries more weight of encouragement to the needy spirit than something said *to* one.

4. Be observant of your children's aptitudes, preferences, and challenges. Take a genuine interest in what interests them. If they want to do well in a particular sport or activity, help them as they set goals. If their desire is fixed, and if help with training or equipment is what you need to provide as a parent,

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

do that if you can. Sometimes it may be better to encourage the child to refocus on a goal that is more attainable, so that he won't be devastated by failure. However, don't try to shield him from challenge, and even intense struggle, to reach a goal — the muscles of character cannot be developed without effort.

5. Read to/with your children. Some of the dearest memories of parent/child relationships are formed through the sharing of books. But share also music, games, special movies, TV, car trips, camping experiences, club activities — all the wonderful choices that can make up daily life.

6. Begin at an early age to train your children to be responsible. Give them chores to do that will make them realize that they are a necessary part of the functioning of the family/household. Perhaps make out a schedule to be posted on the refrigerator or on their doors, so that they can mark off each job as it is done. Be careful to teach that they can help to keep the house straight and neat by putting away their toys as they finish playing with them. Teach them to look behind themselves and not to leave a trail of “out of place” clothes or toys.

7. Teach them to be polite: to speak to adults who come into the room; to say the “magic words”, “Please” and “Thank you”, not to interrupt conversations.

8. As children mature, share cooking, cleaning, laundry, yard maintenance, and other “work” experiences with them, so that they can move into adulthood with some knowledge of how to function in that independent world. It is very important to help them learn to manage money — to shop wisely, to manage credit cards (pay them off every month, without fail), and to resist impulse buying and getting into debt that has not been carefully evaluated.

9. As is taught throughout the Scriptures, permeate your conversations, observations, and instructions with appropriate references to Scripture and to incidences that would apply from the lessons they have learned from the Bible. In addition, have a time of family devotional, for singing, prayer, Bible story with smaller children, and for deeper study with older children.

10. For times of public worship, take Bible books/quiet activities to keep the little ones occupied. For the older ones, teach them to pay attention to what is being said and done, to participate in the singing, and to give a designated portion of their allowance to God. Embed in their thinking the realization that God is real, He is their Father, and that the family unit is His creation to provide them with the love and guidance they need to grow into the kind of people He wants them to be. Graduation from “childhood” means looking to God first, even before looking to parents. That is the goal He and we want them to reach. †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, long-time missionary to India.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Love Your Children

Vance Hutton



Older women are challenged to teach younger women, among many things, to love their children (Titus 2:4,5). Fathers certainly share the responsibility of loving their children. Parents are like sculptors creating a masterpiece. They carve and chisel little ones and little hearts into some type of adults. Being parents is a wonderful privilege, but an awesome responsibility. ***“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them”*** (Psalm 127:3-5). Notice some things inherently involved when we love our children.

1. LOVE THEM ENOUGH TO BE GOOD EXAMPLES BEFORE THEM. What parents do ought to be worthy of imitation. Many parents fall into the category of “do as I say and not as I do”. Jesus denounced this long ago (Matthew 23:3). Abraham commanded his children after him (Genesis 18:19). Joshua lived for the Lord and led his family in that direction (Joshua 24:15). God chose a godly couple as earthly parents of Jesus (Matthew 1; Luke 2). Zachariah and Elizabeth walked in all the commands of the Lord, blameless, before John was born (Luke 1:6). The faith that characterized Timothy was first in his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5).

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

2. LOVE THEM ENOUGH TO TEACH THEM. Deuteronomy 6:7 speaks of teaching the Lord's words and commands diligently to the children and talking of them when sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, and rising up. Deuteronomy 31:12,13 speaks of teaching the children to fear God and to be obedient to all the words of the law. Proverbs 22:6 refers to training a child. Ephesians 6:4 commands that children be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. From a child, Timothy was instructed in the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:14,15). It is our responsibility to teach them. Do not hope someone else will; do not put that burden on another. Teach them about the Lord, the one church, purity, heaven, etc.
3. LOVE THEM ENOUGH TO DISCIPLINE THEM. *“He that spareth the rod hateth his son and he that loveth him will chasten him”* (Proverbs 13:24). *“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten”* (Revelation 3:19). *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth”* (Hebrews 12:6). Good fathers correct their children, and reverence is created for godly parents (Hebrews 12:9). Discipline brings about the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). Parents should be united and consistent in the discipline of their children. If you love them, you will strive so to be consistent.
4. LOVE THEM ENOUGH TO ALLOW THEM TO LEAVE THE “NEST” AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME: On several occasions, the Bible speaks of children leaving father and mother and cleaving to their mates (Genesis 2; Matthew 19; Ephesians 5). To fail to allow children to form that nucleus and loyalty of a new family is to cause a bundle of problems. Those children now have new and monumental obligations to their mates. More allegiance must be given to mates than to parents. Children must always honor their parents, but loyalty is binding in the new relationship. Allow the children to have great families, to become mature Christians, to be wonderful citizens, and servants to God and others.

Love your children. Time rushes by. Love them enough to be good examples before them, to teach them, to discipline them, and to allow them to create their own families without interference. Parents are so blessed. †

Vance Hutton is the preacher for the Lord's church in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



After intensive and extensive research, irrefutable evidence has been found to prove that no husband has ever been shot while doing the dishes.



A young fellow was proudly showing off his new apartment to a couple of friends late one night. He led the way to his bedroom where there was a big brass gong and a mallet.

“What’s with that big brass gong?” one of the friends asked.

“It’s not a gong. It’s a talking clock,” the fellow replied.

“A talking clock? Seriously?” asked his astonished friend.

“Yup,” replied the fellow.

“How does it work?” the friend asked.

“Watch.” The fellow picked up the mallet, gave the gong an ear-shattering pound, and stepped back.

The three men stood looking at one another for a moment.

Suddenly, someone on the other side of the wall screamed, “**You idiot! It’s one-fifteen in the morning!**”



I happened to be standing in a checkout line at the grocery store the other day and overheard this young woman with light-colored hair discussing recipes with her friend in front of her. “If I can talk my husband into buying a bigger oven, I would like to surprise him with a chocolate moose”.



Nolan has been retired for a few years and just loves to fish. He was sitting in his boat the other day when he heard a voice say, “Pick me up”. He looked around and couldn’t see anyone. He thought he was dreaming when he heard the voice say again, “Pick me up”. He looked in the water, and there, floating on the top, was a frog.

Nolan said, “Are you talking to me?” The frog said, “Yes, I’m talking to you. Pick me up, then kiss me, and I’ll turn into the most beautiful woman you have ever seen. I’ll make sure that all your friends are envious and jealous because I will be your bride!”

PROVERBS 17:22

Nolan looked at the frog for a short time, reached over, picked it up carefully, and placed it in his front pocket.

The frog said, “What, are you nuts? Didn’t you hear what I said? I said kiss me and I will be your beautiful bride.”

Nolan opened his pocket, looked at the frog, and said, “Nah, at my age I’d rather have a talking frog.”



In a day of living in such a topsy-turvy world, I always come back to that penetrating question that continues to perplex the great minds of our time — Why doesn’t glue stick to the inside of the bottle?



Let me tell you, you’d better always be careful around these little old ladies. They don’t kid around... they tell it like it is!

I recently preached a little longer than usual and this sweet lady came up to me and said, “Preacher, has anyone ever told you that you’re a wonderful speaker?” (I immediately thought to myself, “Now isn’t that great. It’s always encouraging when the members recognize my ability.”) I then told her, “No, sister Smith, no one has ever told me that I am a wonderful speaker.”

She quickly responded with, “Well then, whatever gave you the idea that you are?”



Charlie and his grandson Anthony went fishing together. When they entered the cabin, they kept the lights off until they were inside so they wouldn’t attract insects. Still, a few fireflies got in while the door was open. Anthony noticed them first and whispered, “It’s no use, Grandpa. Now the mosquitoes are coming after us with flashlights!”



A little girl asked her father a very serious question, “Daddy, do all fairy tales begin with ‘Once upon a time’?”

The father somberly responded, “No, honey, a whole lot of fairy tales begin with, ‘If elected I promise...’”



Check out these remarkable newspaper headlines:

- Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant
- War Dims Hope for Peace
- Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges
- Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery: Hundreds Dead

Focused

SPC Alex Gibson

Have you ever heard the saying, “Where there’s a will there’s a way”? It can also be said that if you want something badly enough you’ll get it. But is that really true?

When I was 16, I wanted a motorcycle badly. My dad told me to do my homework on them and I did. My mom said over her dead body. So as time wore on and I turned 18, I still wanted one. My dad realized that this was a bit more than just a passing fancy, as I had logical reasons for wanting one

and had kept wanting one for 2 years. Again my mom said no dice. So I joined the army, earned some money and got my first motorcycle when I was 21. My mom still doesn’t approve, but then again she is my mother and will always frown on things she believes may put me at risk. As an aside, I’m now on my third bike. I had an altercation with a truck that totaled the first bike, the second one I enjoyed thoroughly but ended up trading it in for something less needy in terms of gas and maintenance. I mean, between 50-70 miles a gallon is hard to beat. But why would I be telling you about my infatuation with riding, in a Christian magazine? It’s simple; there was a single-minded focus on getting what I wanted, and though it took 5 years, I got it in the end.

A driven person will often times be unstoppable at whatever task he sets himself to do, even enduring physical and emotional pain, hunger, and in some cases death or dismemberment. This quality is more often seen in stories today, in the villain, which is sad. It’s the character who never wavers in his/her goals and never accepts defeat, the one who will do everything in his power to get what he wants. This trait is often shown as people being obsessed and unbalanced. But is being focused — persistent — a bad thing? Hell’s minions are bent on the total suffering of God’s creation. And Heaven’s powers are focused on redeeming the creation. There is no distraction from the objective for either, and thus both are totally focused and dedicated.



HEY YOU KIDS!

I think that's why people have such a hard time relating to God's methods. Oh sure, we can all admit that we are sinners, and that we need salvation, bla bla bla. But before too long its onto a little call of duty or Facebook or some other preoccupation, and all thought of sin and salvation goes to the back of our minds. We stay focused for a short while, but only for a time.

What if you spent your entire day focused on God? Well, first you might start with a bit of praying and some reading and singing, but if you honestly focused on Him, you would soon come to your marching orders: "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15).

I'm not suggesting getting on a soap box and pulling a crowd around. Rather, you could start by asking questions of your friends and family, even something as simple as saying, "God bless", to people as you go through your day — the checkout lady or teacher or whoever you happen to interact with.

If you start doing that, you'll find that, maybe not right away but over time with a constant focus on God, people will react differently to you. You may find some people open up to you or maybe some become more hostile. But there will be changes. I'm not saying to do anything crazy or out of the ordinary here, just to focus your mind on God and keep it there. Know who else did this? People like Christ and Paul. And look where it got them — maimed and dead — but alive through the Father's love, for all time.

And that reward is waiting for all of us who set our eyes on it. Doesn't God promise in Revelation 2:10, "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*"?

People these days think that being single minded is a bad thing. I say it's the only logical way. My walk with God should be the only thing that matters to me at all; everything else is but shadows and dust. Is that to say I should throw the world away? No, but that it is a temporary environment is true enough. Keep your focus on God, and He will take care of the world; try and multi-task, and you're going to find it's more trouble than it's worth.

As always, I want feed back, people. God bless, and take care. †

Alex Gibson is currently stationed at Fort Campbell, KY, USA.

**"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro
throughout the whole earth,
to show Himself strong on behalf of those
whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).**

HEY YOU KIDS!

Evolution? What do you think?

Ashley Bates

As a true Christian and a science major working toward my degree, it has been quite some feat to face the indoctrination in the public school systems. The world continues to push evolution and the *Big Bang Theory*. While this may make sense to the scientific world of non-believers, we, as Christians, know this cannot be the real deal as it is typically presented.

For a moment, let us say that the Big Bang really did happen. Well, what caused the Big Bang? Where did all the atoms, particles, and materials come from? Did the earth really just magically appear in such an organized fashion? Simply said, everything had to come from somewhere; it did not just *appear*. Chaos-to-order does not even begin to make any sense in my mind. The Bible is the best explanation of where this all started, establishing evidence of “intellectual design” in Genesis. Chapter 1, verse 1, says, “*In the Beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” Plain and simple, right? To Christians, yes; to the scientific world, no. So, what is the real story behind an intelligent design? Why is there such a debate over the beginning of life? How should we as Christians respond to these scientific debates?

Of course, not all scientists accept evolution as the answer, and not all scientists who believe in an intelligent design also believe this designer is God. Many more scientists are beginning to realize that evidence directs us toward something more than Neo-Darwinism. During the years of Darwin’s experiments and studies, his mistaken conclusions were more excusable than today, because no one then had any true concept of DNA and microbiology. But with the current knowledge of the irreducible complexity of everything that exists, there is no excuse for any scientist to accept evolution as the explanation for life.

The definition of evolution is “the minor, gradual change of a species over a long period of time”. Minor changes? Doesn’t that completely eliminate the idea of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, which requires the major jump from one-celled amoeba to 100 trillion interwoven cells of the human body? That can hardly be called small changes!

The Bible tells us in Genesis 1:26-27, “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created*

HEY YOU KIDS!

man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” This simply shows that there is no way that the complex body of a human could have evolved from one single cell, no matter how much time was allowed. Genesis 2:7 states, “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*” This verse declares that God created *man*, not an *amoeba* or an *ape* that would evolve into a man. Yet, the scientific world does not grant any freedom for others to question or oppose their conclusions. As long as the mouth of the Christian student or scientist stays shut, your career in the scientific world is secure, but as soon as you even mention the thought of intelligent design, you are attacked and dismissed.

We, as Christians, should keep our heads high in this situation. As a science student, I learned to not protest with teachers in the classroom of public schools and colleges, but to keep the truth inside my heart and not let my beliefs be attacked. Now, as an undergraduate student at Harding University, I have professors who keep God at the base of what they teach. I have found my passion for science can grow in a healthy Christian environment. I personally, through my studies, do believe in “micro evolution”. Let me explain what I mean by that statement. I believe that a species does evolve within itself, over time. For example, a dog that is native to the harsh cold winters of Alaska has a need for an extra heavy coat of fur. If this breed of dogs is transplanted in sunny Orlando, Florida, they will no longer need a heavy coat. If they keep it, they will simply become extinct because they will be unable to survive the Florida heat. Therefore, over time, this breed of dogs will ‘evolve’ to have a more suitable fur coat for their new habitat. This is a minor change of a species over a period of time.

I deny with every fiber of my being that humans evolved from apes. This is absurd, as Genesis teaches that God made man — Adam — from the dust of the earth. Another thought that comes to my mind is, if we started as monkeys then why are there still monkeys in the present day? If some of us evolved, why not all of us? The puzzle pieces just don’t fit together when evolution is so distorted.

As true Christians, let us hold our heads high. One of the most important things I have learned is to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. More important than any other question is a person’s acceptance of Christ and the salvation He offers. I would love to hear your thoughts and comments, so feel free to send me an email at abates3@harding.edu. †

Ashley Bates is currently a student at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, USA.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY MERCY

Paula Bates

1. But the mercy of the _____ is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that _____ him. Psalm 103:17
2. For thy mercy is _____ unto the heavens and thy _____ unto the clouds. Psalm 57:10
3. Have mercy upon me, Oh God, according to thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of his tender _____ blot out my _____. Psalm 51:1
4. Be ye therefore _____ as your _____ also is merciful. Luke 6:36
5. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have _____, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but _____ to repentance. Matthew 9:13
6. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be _____ and faithful _____ in things pertaining to _____, to make reconciliation for the sins of the _____. Hebrews 2:17

~~ANSWERS~~

1. Lord, fear
2. Great, truth
3. Mercies, transgressions
4. Merciful, Father
5. Mercy, sinners
6. Merciful, high, priest, God, people

Answers:

Paul wrote, "Now the Spirit speaks

First Timothy 4:1

Glenn Colley

truth. You may become discouraged

expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

This is one of the most painful realities in the Good Book. Some will depart from the faith. It is painful because they are not just departing from *a* faith, but from *the* faith, that is, the practice of true religion taught in the New Testament. It is no wonder that a doctrine which pulls people away from the faith would originate with demons. It certainly does not come from anything good.

I wish no one ever left the faith. The end result is devastating. It would have been "*better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*" (2 Peter 2:21). According to Peter, they are like a dog returning to his vomit when they leave the faith to go back into a lost condition.

But listen, Christian — we cannot let this reality discourage us from taking the Gospel to new friends. The pain of teaching and converting one to Christ, only to see him leave to follow other doctrines, is awful, and it makes you want to give up on teaching people the

and believe no one ever holds faithful very long when converted in this generation. However, that is not true, and this verse brings us to see that the problem of people departing from the faith has existed since the infancy of the church. In fact, did you know that there were disciples of Jesus who walked away after hearing Him teach (John 6:66)?

Jesus prepared us for losing Christians to the doctrines of demons when He taught the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:18-23). The seed is the Word of God, and the sower is the teacher of the Word. The soils represent the different hearts of those who hear. Jesus says some will leave the truth because they have been prejudiced to the true Gospel, others because they have too much to do, still others because they just are not willing to face the challenges of Christian living. The Lord concluded the list by saying that some will be like good soil and will grow and prosper as Christians.

The conclusion of this little article must be Galatians 6:9, "*And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*" ☩

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

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred twice in the New Testament (Acts 2 and 10; see 11:15). Humans cannot baptize anyone with the Holy Spirit. A human is able to lower a per-

Baptism with the Holy Spirit was not a command to be obeyed. Jesus told the apostles to simply wait for it to happen (Acts 1:4-5). **Baptism with the Holy Spirit came by**

Baptized with the Holy Spirit

Royce Frederick

son into water and immerse (baptize) him in water. But Jesus is the One with the power to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5).

Baptism with the Holy Spirit did not make men “apostles”. Before Acts 2, Jesus had appointed twelve disciples to be His apostles (Luke 6:13-16). **Baptism with the Holy Spirit was not the moment when God forgave sin.** After the group in Acts 10 had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, Peter “*commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*” (Acts 10:48). This baptism was in “water” (10:47) for the remission of sins — the same purpose explained by Peter in Acts 2, “... *and let every one of you be baptized for the remission of sins...*” (2:38; see 8:35-39; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20,21; Romans 6:3,4,17,18).

surprise. In Acts 2, the apostles knew they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, but did not know exactly when it would occur. In Acts 10, the Gentiles did not even know it would happen.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit was a complete “immersion” with the Holy Spirit. He overwhelmed the recipients. In Acts 2, the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. *This removed prejudice against Jesus, which had been in the hearts of many hearers.* They were amazed; they realized that this was a sign that God was with the speakers; the people listened; and they obeyed the Gospel (Acts 2:6-8,33,38,41).

In Acts 10, Gentile hearers were baptized with the Holy Spirit. *This removed prejudice against Gentiles which had been in the hearts of the*

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Baptism with the Holy Spirit cleared the way for the apostles to use “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” — the Gospel.

speaker and his companions, who were from the Jewish nation (Acts 10:28,47; 11:1-4, 15-18). It was a sign that God would welcome Gentiles to obey the Gospel and enter His kingdom.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit cleared the way for the apostles to use “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19) — the Gospel (Romans 1:16; 6:3-5,17,18; Colossians 1:13). First Jews, then Gentiles obeyed the Gospel and entered the kingdom. Thus, the kingdom was opened to all people

of all nations! Jesus had foretold it and commanded it (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15,16). †



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

The kingdom was opened to all people of all nations!

THE DISCIPLE JESUS LOVED

Dan R. Owen



John, the son of Zebedee, was the disciple whom Jesus loved. His life is an example to each of us of what a disciple should be. He was Jesus' favorite. He provides us with a spiritual hero to imitate.

Born to Zebedee and Salome, John was the younger son of a fisherman. His family was used to hard work, but also enjoyed a

comfortable living and considerable means. Young John was raised on the sea, knowing how to use wind, ropes, nets, and men to get a catch and make a living. But one day, the young Prophet Jesus called him from his nets and changed his life.

John was awestruck by Jesus. His miracles, His teaching, and His personality totally captivated the

BIBLE CHARACTERS

young fisherman. As he followed the prophet, he soon became His closest friend. It was an incredible journey from the Mount of Transfiguration, to Gethsemane, to the cross, to the empty tomb. It left this young man totally changed. He had been with God. He knew it, and he would follow his master's command and tell the world about it.

John experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit, the flood of conversions on Pentecost, and the boom of Christianity in the earliest days of the church. He was used as an instrument of God. He was dragged into court, warned, released, arrested again, imprisoned, beaten, and released again, only to continue preaching. He witnessed the ravaging of the church by Saul of Tarsus, saw the church scattered, and eventually extended his hand of fellowship to Saul, the Christian brother and apostle to the Gentiles.

John was devastated by his older brother's martyrdom in Jerusalem, and eventually was led by the Spirit to Ephesus. During the persecution of the tyrant Domitian, he was exiled to the island of Patmos as a very old man. There, his Lord Jesus came to him, showed him visions explaining the great purpose of God, and commanded him to write them down. In A. D. 98 the feeble apostle was released and returned to Asia, where

he ministered among the churches until the day of his death.

The disciple whom Jesus loved never wavered from the day he left his father's boat until he died in Ephesus. His life is the story of putting one's hand to the divine plow and not looking back. He knew who his Master was and followed Him to the end. This is what it means to be a disciple. †

Dan R. Owen preaches for the Broadway Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

“...Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. ...“Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We are going with you also.’ They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ... “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea” (John 21:1-7).

Some New Testament VIPs

Owen Cosgrove

VIP (sometimes written as V.I.P.) designates one who is considered a *very important person*. This con-jures up all types of mental images, from some head of state to the fellow who is willing to pay several thousand dollars to watch a football game from a “VIP Suite”.

In the New Testament, every human being is a VIP in the sense that he has a soul worth more than all of the world. Jesus came to “*seek and save that which is lost*” because every person is unique and precious in the sight of God. And the marvel of all marvels is that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6,8).

There are some very important people mentioned in the New Testament. Herod, the Roman king of Judaea, was appointed by Pompey to rule much of Palestine. He attached “the Great” to his name. To placate the people, he rebuilt the Jewish Temple in great splendor. He is the ruler who had the infants in and

around Bethlehem killed to protect his throne. Indeed he was a VIP. It was his son who had James the brother of John killed by the sword in Acts 12, and his grandson, Herod Agrippa II, who heard Paul’s defense in Acts 26.

There are many other VIPs in the New Testament: the High Priest who led the effort to kill Jesus, Pontius Pilate, whose cowardice allowed the process to go on, as well as the various leaders who persistently endeavored to trap and embarrass the Lord, and untold others who were the movers and shakers of their society — all VIPs.

But there are others mentioned in the New Testament who to some may have been the dregs of humanity, but in God’s eyes were *very important persons*: Lazarus, who sat at the rich man’s gates begging for crumbs, the wayward young man who wasted a fortune on riotous living before repenting, “the sinful woman” who anointed the Lord’s feet with spike-nard and bathed them with her hair,

BIBLE CHARACTERS

the woman of questionable morals who led the village of Sychar to come out and hear the Lord, the poor widow who gave two mites to the Lord's treasury. The list goes on endlessly: the poor, the blind, the lame, the sick, the troubled, the slaves, the discouraged, the rejects of society — all of them found a friend in Jesus, and to Him they were all very important.

Perhaps one of the reasons why many people do not have a higher estimate of themselves, a better self-image, is because they have allowed critics

to appraise their value rather than Christ. Maybe one of the reasons that some "sell out" so cheap to themselves and to society is that they have not realized what a VIP they are and can be in the sight of God.

The world of VIPs can put a low price tag on the common people, but the Lord never did. God told the prophet Samuel, "*...the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7). In the eyes of God, every person is a VIP. †



Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and lives in Waxahachie, Texas, 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. My husband was a wealthy man (1 Samuel 25:2).
2. I was beautiful and wise, but my husband was harsh and evil (1 Samuel 25:3).
3. My husband kept his sheep and goats near Carmel (1 Samuel 25:2).
4. David stayed near my husband's flocks and protected them without taking anything for himself or his men (1 Samuel 25:7,15,16).
5. When David sent servants to ask for provisions for his men, my husband was very rude and refused to help (1 Samuel 25:9-11).
6. David was angry at my husband's refusal of hospitality and planned revenge (1 Samuel 25:13,21,22).
7. One of my servants secretly told me of my husband's rudeness to David (1 Samuel 25:14-17).
8. I intercepted David on his way to kill my husband. I gave him provisions and begged him not to do my husband harm (1 Samuel 25:18-20, 23-31).
9. My husband's name was Nabal (1 Samuel 25:3).
10. About eleven days after the encounter with David, the Lord smote my husband. David then took me as his wife (1 Samuel 25:36-42).

See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

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

1. I am a very prominent river in the Bible lands.
2. My source is in the north and my mouth is in the south.
3. My width ranges from eighty feet to one hundred eighty feet.
4. My depth is from five to twelve feet.
5. As the crow flies, my length is 120 miles, but if you follow the path of the water, my length is 200 miles.
6. My elevation falls an average of twenty-two feet per mile for a total of about three thousand feet drop in elevation.
7. God used my waters to heal a man from leprosy (2 Kings 5:10).
8. The Israelites crossed me on dry ground to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 1:2; 3:17).
9. John used me for many baptisms, including the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:13).
10. One of my sources is Mt. Hermon and my mouth is in the Dead Sea.

See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Why Must I Give?

Bobby Dockery

Sometimes people accuse the church of putting too much emphasis on money. Some even seem to believe that it is somehow inappropriate to bring up “money” when talking about “spiritual” things. But Jesus refused to believe that! He talked about money constantly. Two-thirds of His parables involve the proper use of money. He insisted that it is impossible to separate religion from giving (Luke 6:38). In fact, giving is mentioned more than 7,000 times in the Bible!

Clearly, if we are going to get serious about living for God, then we must talk about giving! Here’s why:



1. Giving Is an Expression of Worship. It is impossible to worship God without giving! The first time the word “worship” appears in the Bible it is closely associated with an act of sacrificial giving (See Genesis 22:5)! Worship is to pay homage, show honor, respect, adora-

tion, and reverence. Giving does all of this. In fact, our actions often speak louder than our professions!

2. Giving Is an Expression of Discipleship. We cannot be followers of Christ without giving. We are reminded by the apostle Paul:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus is our example in all things; to be His people we must do as He has done. He was the greatest giver in all of history! It was the Rich Young Ruler’s unwillingness to give which prevented him from becoming a disciple. Poor attitudes about giving can keep us from following Christ today!

3. **Giving Is an Expression of Love.**

Giving demonstrates the genuineness of our love. Love reveals itself in giving (John 3:16). In encouraging the Corinthians to give, Paul wrote: *“I am putting your love to the test”* (2 Corinthians 8:8 NEB). Love gives! It is as simple as that! Inadequate giving is a symptom of immature or insincere love.

4. **Giving Is an Expression of Unity.**

In one sense, giving is between an individual and God. But in another sense, giving is a corporate act — something done in fellowship with other Christians, as well. Paul appealed to the Corinthians to give in order that they might have fellowship with others in doing a good work

(2 Corinthians 8:1). When it comes to the work program of the church, we all have a vision of what needs to be done which differs a little from that of everybody else. But by our giving we demonstrate that we are willing to put aside personal preferences to work for the good of the entire church. Our contribution represents our shared response, as a family, to the work which God has given us to do!

Real giving begins in the giving of self (2 Corinthians 8:5). Self is the hardest thing to give. But until you have given that, you really don’t have anything else which God can use! †

Bobby Dockery has preached for many years in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

“... in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality...

“... but they first gave themselves to the Lord”

(2 Corinthians 8:2,5).

BIBLE QUESTIONS

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 “broadminded” 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)?

BIBLE QUESTIONS

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 leadeth 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), vain worship (Matthew 15), and 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 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 hath 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 is 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.



BIBLE QUESTIONS

What Does It Mean to "Obey the Gospel"?

Dennis Gulledge

Often we employ the expression, "obey the Gospel". What does it mean? Is it peculiar to churches of Christ? Does the Bible teach such a concept? If so, how can we obey the Gospel?

The Gospel is the **death** of Jesus for our sins, His **burial** and His **resurrection** (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). How can we obey this Gospel? Paul answers, "*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you*" (Romans 6:17). This obedience was something rendered in the past that resulted in their change of state from servants of sin to servants of righteousness (verse 18). The "*servant of righteousness*" is that person who has been buried with Christ in baptism and raised to a new life (Roman 6:4-6). This is the "*form of doctrine*" (Gospel) that we obey.

There is not only a past obedience to the Gospel, but also a continuous obedience that we must demonstrate (1 John 1:7). We are to continue to obey the Gospel all of our lives. Paul wrote, "*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God*" (Romans 6:12,13). Therefore, Gospel obedience is continuous in that it is seen in the things we do and do not do. †

Dennis Gulledge preaches for the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

Evangelism Now and Later

Loy Mitchell

INTRODUCTION

- A. Priorities have always been a problem (Matthew 6:33).
- B. What is your prime work right now? Get an education? Make money?
- C. Education is important and is part of doing God's will, but when can we evangelize (1 Timothy 4:16)?

BODY

I. WE MUST TAKE HEED TO OURSELVES.

- A. Are our lives pure (1 Timothy 4:12; 5:22)?
- B. What others see carries more weight than what they hear.
- C. Can others see our humility (James 4:10)?
- D. Do others see Christ in us (Colossians 1:27)?

II. TAKE HEED TO THE DOCTRINE OR TEACHING.

- A. We cannot teach what we do not know (Hebrews 5:12-14).
- B. Can we teach from the "overflow"?
- C. Where is the fire (Jeremiah 20:9)?

III. YOU AND OTHERS WILL BE SAVED (1 TIMOTHY 4:16).

- A. God puts each one in contact with others.
- B. All are examples, either for good or bad.
- C. Get involved.

IV. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- A. Let others know by example that God is first in your life through prayer and reading His Word.
- B. Remember, God loves you!
- C. Watch your language.
- D. See the positive.

CONCLUSION

- A. Pray for wisdom and guidance.
- B. Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves



Loy Mitchell is a long time missionary to Zimbabwe and resides in Dresden, Tennessee, USA.

CHARTS AND OUTLINES



Come To the Feast

Andy Jooste

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Americans love to eat — numerous eating places.
- B. All are thrilled at receiving an invitation to a banquet — R.S.V.P.

I. ALL THINGS ARE READY.

- A. Preparations began 3,000 years earlier (Genesis 12:3).
- B. All nations would be welcome (Genesis 12:3; Luke 13:25).
- C. Fulfillment of prophecies (Matthew 22:4; Acts 3:18-25).

II. THE TABLE IS SPREAD.

- A. Set in the midst of enemies (Psalm 23:5).
- B. More than ‘soup and sandwich’ provided — “my cup runs over!”
- C. On the menu:
 - 1. Living, thirst-quenching water (John 4:10,13,14).
 - 2. Living, hunger-satisfying bread (John 6:35).
 - 3. Eternal energizing nourishment (John 11:25,26).

III. ACCESS STRICTLY BY INVITATION.

- A. No “sneak-ins”. No ‘side-door’ access (Matthew 22:12).
- B. Who will be turned away, surprised (Matthew 7:21-23).
- C. The only acceptable entrance voucher (John 14:6).

CONCLUSION:

- A. Is admission a free gift?
- B. The high cost of salvation (John 3:16). “Jesus paid it all.”
- C. The gift must be received and used (John 1:11,12; Acts 2:36-41) †

Andy Jooste preaches for the church in Mount Vernon, OH, USA

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses Isaiah 49:15,16

Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

In this beautiful passage, God appeals to the inborn instinct of mothers to nurture and protect their children. Yet He recognized that there are times when women become perverted to the point that they may fail.

Repeatedly, in Scripture, God likens Himself to familiar human relationships, so that we may better understand Him. Emotion is ascribed to God; in fact, our human emotions are small measures of His own, as is shown repeatedly in Scripture, where we are told that He loves (1 John 4:8), rejoices (Zephaniah 3:17), is grieved (Psalm 78:40,41), etc.

How much more reassuring and consoling could words be than these? When we write something in the palm of our hands, it is ever before us, as a constant reminder. God says that our walls — our protective boundaries — are continually in His vision, as is our very name, being written in the palm of His hand! If we, in our human weakness, are not reassured by these words, nothing can help us!

Sodom and Gomorrah

Rex Banks

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is one of the best known incidents in Scripture. According to the book of Genesis, in Abraham's day Sodom and Gomorrah were two of a group of five cities which stretched along a luxuriant plain in the Jordan Valley (Genesis 13:10,11).

Abraham's nephew, Lot, moved to Sodom with his family (Genesis 14:12), and when God told Abraham that He was about to destroy the city because of its wickedness (Genesis 18:20), Abraham managed to secure divine aid to remove his relative from the city before its destruction. Shortly afterwards "*the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven*" (Genesis 19:24). The picture is one of complete devastation:

"All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows on it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which

the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath" (Deuteronomy 29:23).

Predictably, the critics maintained that this account of destruction was nothing more than a story or a vaguely remembered incident set down in writing long after the time of the alleged event. Fortunately not everyone agreed.

Randall Price tells us that in 1960, trees were found standing in a growth position at a depth of 23 feet at the southern end of the Dead Sea, showing that the water had risen and submerged ancient land areas. What's more, further excavations on the eastern shore of Transjordan uncovered a 23-foot-thick fortification wall surrounding a city called Bab edh-Dhra. Evidence also showed that the city had been destroyed by fire. Some puzzling details emerged. Randall Price has a lengthy quotation by archaeologist Bryant Wood, part of which is as follows:

"The evidence would suggest that

BIBLICAL HISTORY



this site of Bab edh-Dhra is the biblical city of Sodom ... [The dead of the city] were buried in ... a structure that archaeologists referred to as a charnel house ... [These structures] all had one common feature and that was that they had been burned — from the inside out...

“[What] they discovered was that the fire did not begin inside the building but rather the fire started on the roof of the building, then the roof burned through, collapsed into the interior and then the fire spread inside the building. And this was the case in every single charnel house that they excavated...

“Now this is something that is quite difficult to explain naturally... but the Bible gives us the answer. The

Bible talks about God’s destruction of these cities ... and it speaks of God raining fire and brimstone from heaven, and there we have evidence that that is exactly what happened.”

Interestingly, too, investigations of the shallow southern end of the Dead Sea have revealed “abundant deposits of asphalt, petroleum and natural gas...[which] reminds us of the statement in Genesis 14:10 that the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen (tar) pits” (ibid). Randall Price records the suggestion of one geologist that the “*fire from the Lord out of heaven*” may have been due to the ignition, by lightning, of these combustible materials. He also reminds us that there were five “*cities of the plain*,” four of which were destroyed by God at the same time, and tells us that a total of five sites have been located in the area. All sites had been destroyed or abandoned at about the same time and the same ash deposits found at Bab edh-Dhra were found at each site. Certainly, dense smoke ascending from the sites (Genesis 19:28) is consistent with a petroleum-based fire. The bottom line is that although the evidence is not conclusive, the facts uncovered by archaeology do suggest that the biblical cities of the plain have been discovered. †

Rex Banks is a preacher of the Gospel in New Zealand.



From Creation Until Now

Louis Rushmore

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), the first verse in the Bible, accounts for the existence of the created universe in a way with which no alternative, God-hating, human theory or any manmade, world religion can begin to

compare. This explanation for the existence of all that is, consistently populates the Bible throughout.

“You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You” (Nehemiah 9:6).

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6-9).

“And: You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands” (Hebrews 1:10).

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3). (See also Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Psalm 8:3; 102:25; 115:15; Jeremiah 51:15; Revelation 4:11; 10:6.)

Hebrews 3:4 reads, *“For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.”* It is logical or reasonable to conclude that this earth and the universe were created by someone superior to the inhabitants of this planet. It is

illogical, unreasonable, and unscientific to conclude that life sprung from lifeless matter and that the intricate design evident in all of creation haplessly occurred without a Master Designer. The divinely inspired apostle Paul affirmed in his letter to the Roman Christians that mankind cannot excuse itself from acknowledging the existence of God, because the evidence of God is everywhere.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Romans 1:18-24).

Notice that God refers to His creation of the universe as well as the creation of mankind as the basis of the authority by which He gives humans divine instruction (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Acts 4:24; 14:15,17), and the authority by which He will punish disobedience.

There is one God, but three persons who share the attribute of being God, designated in Scripture as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Just as there are five fingers or digits on one hand, and it is still one hand, there are three persons that possess the quality of being God (divine), but there is still only one God or Godhead. All three of these divine persons participated in creation (Genesis 1:26), but creation is especially attributed to the Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9,10; Hebrews 1:2,3).

It is important to understand that the same power by which the universe was created is the same power by which the universe continues to exist (Nehemiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:2-3; 2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 4:11). *“For by Him [Jesus Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16,17).*

God is the first cause by which the entire universe with its intricate design came into being. He is eternal, which means that He had no beginning. God is not subject to the laws of nature or science, but He is responsible for the exist-

tence of what mankind calls the laws of nature, and He makes true scientific rules possible, by which the universe works in harmony with itself. God is to be awed, heeded, worshipped and served. *“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands”* (Acts 17:24).

A Book of Divine Instructions

The great Creator-God did not leave mankind without guidance for properly interacting with each other and properly interacting with Him. By dictating His will to about 40 humans over approximately 1,600 years (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20,21), God provided mankind with an instruction manual, the Bible. It contains 66 books, divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

About 2,500 years after creation, God inspired Moses to write the first five books of the Bible, and in Genesis, the first of those books, God gave details about the creation of everything, including mankind (Genesis 1-3). The first man was named Adam, and the first woman was named Eve; the entire human race descended from this first couple.

The Old Testament contains 39 books and covers two related but distinctly different and successive systems of God-given religion: Patriarchy and Judaism.

The New Testament contains 27 books and covers the transition from Judaism to Christianity, this latter God-given religion to which every person living today is obligated to obey. Not only so, but every blessing for this life and eternally that are available to people living today can be found in the New Testament portion of the Bible (John 10:10; Ephesians 1:3).

Every religion practiced today besides Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity is younger than these God-given religions, and only Christianity remains as a valid, God-given religion today. Everything else is either a hollow, manmade religion (Matthew 15:9) or a form of something once implemented by God but is no longer authorized by Him (Romans 7:1-7; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:9). True, biblical Christianity is the only valid religion today, but not everything that represents itself to be Christianity abides by the divine instruction in the New Testament; there are counterfeits (Matthew 15:13).

Patriarchy

The word “Patriarchy” means father rule and represents well the system of religion that God initially gave to humanity. God spoke to certain fathers of

families, who were expected to convey God's instructions to their families and the families of others. Some of the prominent fathers to whom God imparted divine instruction were Adam, Noah and Abraham. This was a family- type of religion, and it continued for about 2,500 years before God gave another, successive religion to one family and its descendants.

Part of the religion of Patriarchy involved the sacrifice of animals in worship of God. God Himself sacrificed the first animals to make clothes for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). The first pair were created naked (Genesis 2:25), just as babies are born naked, and as babies are innocent and unaware in many respects, Adam and Eve were created innocent and unaware of the full consequences of disobeying God. However, when our first parents ate fruit from a tree that they were forbidden to touch or from which to eat (Genesis 2:16,17; 3:3), they disobeyed God or sinned (1 John 3:4). In addition to being guilty of sin, by which they displeased God, Adam and Eve became aware that they were naked.

Thereafter and throughout the time of Patriarchy, mankind worshipped God, inclusive of animal sacrifices. The animal sacrifices were unable to compensate for the sin that occurred (Hebrews 10:4) and stood between mankind and God (Isaiah 59:1,2), but the animal sacrifices prepared the thinking of mankind (Galatians 3:23-4:5; Hebrews 10:1-4) for the perfect sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:26; 10:11,12) that could remove the barrier of sin between mankind and God (1 John 3:5).

Judaism

About 3,500 years ago, God chose a man named Moses, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (also called Israel) and Levi to inaugurate the next God-given religion, Judaism. The family of Jacob had grown into a nation. Judaism was instituted at Mt. Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula at the head of the Red Sea (just west of Egypt and east of the Arabian Peninsula). Whereas Patriarchy was a family-type religion, Judaism was a national-type religion for what became known as the Israelites.

Judaism also included animal sacrifices in its worship, again which were incapable of removing the barrier of sin between mankind and God, but likewise prepared the mind of mankind for the perfect sacrifice that would come later (Hebrews 9:22- 24). This God-given religion continued for about 1,500 years before God inaugurated the third and final God-given religion, Christianity. Divine instruction for Patriarchy and Judaism, as well as historical information corresponding to those periods, make up the 39 books of the Old Testament.

Christianity

Through the God-given religion of Christianity, God provided for the true removal of the barrier of sin between mankind and Himself, through a perfect sacrifice. The second person of the Godhead, the one we know as Jesus Christ or the Son, was born of a virgin about 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem, five miles south of Jerusalem (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-26). He who participated in creation took on the fleshly form of the creation, man (John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16). The first four books of the New Testament are a biography of Jesus during his earthly life and ministry.

At the conclusion of three years of ministry, Jesus permitted Himself to be taken by wicked Jewish rulers who persuaded the Roman authorities to crucify our Lord on a cross. Thereby, Jesus Christ became the perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10) for the removal of sins, which all the sacrifices of animals under Patriarchy and Judaism were unable to accomplish (Hebrews 10:1-4). Rather than remain in the grave, after three days, Jesus Christ arose from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). After encouraging His apostles and disciples for 40 days (Acts 1:3), Jesus Christ ascended into the sky and back to heaven where God is (Luke 24:51)

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

Worship

Now for nearly 2,000 years, Christianity has been and is the only God-given religion authorized for mankind to practice. Animal sacrifices are no longer performed after the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, has come. Each first day of the week, Christians worship God in His own appointed way as recorded in the books of the New Testament (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This worship involves five activities: singing worshipful songs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), teaching or preaching (Acts 20:7), observing a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ in eating unleavened bread (symbolizing the body of Christ) and drinking grape juice (symbolizing the blood of Christ) (1 Corinthians 11:23-29), prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15) and a contribution of the increase of one's wealth (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). These are performed in no particular order.

Salvation

The New Testament teaches about salvation from past sins with the promise of an eternity in heaven for the faithful. One can only know what God expects of him or her and what God promises by reading or hearing read to him or her God's Word in the New Testament; faith that Jesus is the Son of God develops from trusting the revealed, Word of God (Romans 10:17; John 8:24). Repentance is the realization that there is sin in our lives that separates us from fellowship with God and the determination to turn from committing sin to obeying God (Luke 13:3; Romans 6:17). Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God ought to be willing to acknowledge that faith to Christian witnesses, as anciently the Ethiopian treasurer of Acts 8:37 did. Then, a person desiring to be saved from his or her sins must submit obediently to our Lord's command to be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12). Finally, after baptism, a Christian must try to live faithfully as long as he or she lives. However, on those occasions when Christians sin, by repenting and praying a Christian's sins can be forgiven (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).

Christian Living

The New Testament contains instructions on how Christians are supposed to conduct themselves as Christians in general, as parents (Ephesians 6:4), as children (Ephesians 6:1) and as citizens (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:17), irrespective of in which nation they reside.

God has always designated differing roles for men and women in the family and in religion (1 Timothy 2:8-15), and the same is true under Christianity. In addition, the New Testament calls upon Christians to be morally pure (Titus 2:12), honest (Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21; 1 Peter 2:12), charitable, hard workers (Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:22-24) and obedient citizens. New Testament-guided Christian living makes Christians the best possible people on earth and prepares them for an eternity where God resides, in heaven.

Christian Service

Conscientious Christians happily serve a risen Savior, Jesus Christ. At the same time, we serve the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. The only way that a Christian can serve God acceptably is to serve God in the ways that He designates in the New Testament. Christian service includes practicing benevolence toward both Christians and non-Christians (2 Corinthians 9:13; Gala-

tians 6:10), as well as teaching or edifying both Christians and non-Christians (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:12). However, the primary area of Christian service is to share the good news about the Gospel (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16), which highlights the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Savior.

Only in compliance with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament can anyone have confidence that his or her sins have been forgiven and that heaven with God forever awaits. A Christian's purpose in life, as was the case under Patriarchy and Judaism, too, is to prepare for spending eternity with God in heaven (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10,11).

Christian Doctrine

In addition to instructions about Christian living and Christian service, the New Testament contains Christian doctrine or teaching about a number of subjects. Complying with whatever God has caused to be penned in the New Testament amounts to obedience. Our lives on earth will not only be happier and more pleasant, but we prepare for Final Judgment and eternity with God by complying with Christian doctrine. *“Though he were a Son [Jesus Christ], yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:8,9).

Obedience is not the same as perfection, but when we do the best one possibly can do to obey God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as well as through divine grace (Ephesians 2:8) and mercy (Titus 3:5), God will make up what we lack in perfection so that we can enjoy the rewards and blessings that He has reserved for His children (John 14:1-3).

Proof

There are two broad areas of proof regarding the existence of God and the Bible that He has given us, by which we are to live, serve, worship and prepare for eternity. First, the created universe around us with its intricate design trumpets the truth that a great Designer, God, is responsible for everything that exists. Second, the Bible itself provides sufficient internal evidence to verify the existence of God and His book, the Bible.

The Bible is filled with ancient prophecies that were made hundreds of years before their fulfillment, all of which prophecies were fulfilled and in every detail. These prophecies include references to the establishment of the

spiritual kingdom or the church (Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:31-45) by the Son of God, our Savior. Approximately, 332 prophecies about Jesus Christ appear in the Bible, many of which were made 700 years before they were fulfilled (Isaiah 7:14). No merely mortal predictions so ancient and so many come true, and exactly true. This indicates that the Bible is divine in origin, given by God. Therefore, the very existence of the Bible verifies the existence of God Who gave it.

Since God exists, and He has given us divine instructions through the Bible about salvation, Christian worship, Christian living, Christian service and Christian doctrine, we are obligated to comply with all that God in the New Testament has instructed us to do. God has reserved wondrous blessings for those who become His children, including forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) and valid hope of an eternity in heaven with Him.

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

Through the years, many have asked us at World Evangelism about the availability of tracts. The study you have just read is one of almost 80 titles that are now available. “From Creation Until Now” is a 16-page booklet, written especially for those who have little or no knowledge about the Bible or the God of the Bible.

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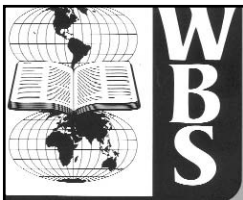
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 28)

1. Those who are in Christ Jesus.
2. Flesh, Spirit.
3. Make us free from the law of sin and death, because we could not keep it perfectly.
4. Condemn sin in the flesh.
5. Death, life and peace.
6. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.
7. Spirit of God.
8. Because the flesh did not free us from death, Jesus did.
9. Live according to the Spirit.
10. Sons of God.
11. Bondage, adoption.
12. Abba, Father.
13. Spirit of God and our spirit.
14. Heirs, joint heirs.

Bible Find (page 49)



Who Am I? (page 89)

Answer: Abigail

Where Am I? (page 90)

Answer: Jordan River

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

TRACTS!!!

What Does the Bible Say About . . .

Worship?

J.C. Choate

(Please consider the question, read the Scripture, and check your answer!)

1. What is worship?

"All actions which men have made shall come and worship before thee. O Lord, and shall glorify thy name" (Psalm 86:9). "I come, I see and worship thee alone, for we know nobody else but thee" (Psalm 115:4). "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing thy name" (Psalm 66:4).

- Following a set of rules.
- Going to mass.
- Praising and glorifying God.

2. How are we to worship?

Christ said, "Worship in spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

- To sincerely worship according to the Scriptures.

- According to conscience.
- Sincerely, in the best of our knowledge.

3. Who are we to worship?

Jesus said, "I see the Father. There shall none see other as man, or any likeness of any thing of heaven above, or that is in the earth, or that is in the water, under the earth, which yet has borne witness to them." John 1:18. "I see the God our God" (John 1:20-24).

- God.
- Leaders of the church and images, icons.

4. How do most people worship?

"But we note that do worship, for do worship the commandment" (Matthew 23:9).

- As the Bible teaches, in spirit.
- According to their consciences.
- According to the Scriptures.

5. What are the acts of

"And they continued singing and playing of lutes, and in process of time they began to sing psalms, and spiritual songs, making in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

"Ready or slow always" (1 Timothy 2:15).

"I give the first step of one of you but for those who prospered him, that shall be when I come" (1 Corinthians 14:20).

- To sing, pray, study and sing, and to give of psalms.
- Whatever the local church there should be better income, along with love.

6. Does God approve of

"I will worship with grace in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the heart" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

- Singing with grace in the Lord.
- Singing with the spirit and I will sing with the heart.
- Singing with the heart.

The Doctrines of Calvinism

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Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice

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Praying According to the Rules

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Elohim: the Godhead

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