

VOLUME SEVENTY-FOUR

# THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



**CHRISTIANS UNDER DURESS IN PAKISTAN**

# *A Moment of Gratitude*

**Ardron Hinton**

I thank my God for the days I've known,  
For all His blessings and the love He's shown,  
For all my human circles of love,  
For the beauty of earth and of stars above,  
For sunsets filling the western sky.

We take for granted such simple joy,  
And thanks are not our tongue's employ.  
We forget the times He's seen us through,  
When skies were gray and hearts were blue.  
So much of what His grace supplies  
Is never seen by our soul's blind eyes.

We struggle along under loads He'd share,  
Because we forget to seek His care.

Dear Lord, forgive our thoughtless ways,  
Our graceless minds and thankless days.  
Help us to grasp how much You've done  
To renew our strength as the race we've run.  
May we count our blessings day by day,  
And see Your love in each sun's ray.

Grant forgiveness and help us know  
Just how much grace You must bestow  
That we may reach our promised land,  
Walking with Jesus, hand in hand.

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

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## EDITORIAL

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In Acts chapter 10, we are introduced to a remarkable man named Cornelius. For those who have some memory of this man, a refresher course will likely be beneficial. For those who have not yet met Cornelius, I believe that you will find him to be a very impressive individual.

### **Just Who Was Cornelius? (verses 1-2)**

This man was a centurion in the Roman army, a commander of approximately 100 soldiers. As we read verse two, you would think we were reading from a biography of a renowned Christian leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Cornelius devoutly feared and revered God. All his household also feared God,

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# *Cornelius – A Truly Unique Individual*

**Byron Nichols**

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likely because of Cornelius's influence. This man helped the poor and prayed fervently to God.

All of this, and he wasn't even a Jew. He lived among the Jews, but was not a Jew himself. Apparently, many of them had favorably impressed him with their dedication to God, and he wanted to be like them.

### **Cornelius' Vision (verses 3-8)**

What an experience it must have been for Cornelius to see and hear an angel in a vision! No wonder that we read in verse 4 that Cornelius was afraid! His prayers and his benevolence had not gone unnoticed.

He was told to send for Simon Peter, who the angel said, *“will tell you what you must do.”* Chapter 11 verse 14 says, *“who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.”*

So, we see clearly that in spite of the goodness of Cornelius, he still was not saved!



### **Peter’s Vision and Call to Caesarea (verses 9-23)**

It took another miracle to convince Peter that it was necessary for him to reconsider what he had been taught and had believed for years regarding the law of Moses.

In Acts 2:38,39, we read from Peter’s great sermon on Pentecost where he explained that all could and would be saved upon their obedience in repenting and being baptized. It becomes evident here in chapter 10 that he had not fully understood that salvation was now being made available to all.

### **Peter Meets Cornelius (verses 24-33)**

Cornelius was unselfish — he wanted his family and friends to share this extraordinary occasion where God had sent His special messenger to explain the plan of salvation.

The humility of Peter is impressive as he refused to accept the undue adoration

being offered to him (verses 25,26).

In verse 33, we have one of the greatest of all statements of commitment that can be found anywhere in the Bible — *“Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”*

## **Peter’s Message (verses 34-43)**

I’m not sure which of these men, Peter or Cornelius, profited the most from this encounter! We learn from verses 34,35 that Peter was now able to see that the Gospel is truly for all! He proceeded then to declare the Good News to these Gentiles, who had become just as acceptable to the Lord as the chosen Jews.

## **The Holy Spirit and the Gentiles (verses 44-48)**

Another miracle occurred, this one involving the Holy Spirit falling on those Gentiles, enabling them to speak with tongues, a happening that had previously occurred only with Jewish Christians.

This was God’s display of approval of the Gentiles, so Peter asked in verse 47, *“Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”* Peter then commanded them to be baptized (verse 48). Even though the Holy Spirit had enabled them to speak with tongues, their sins had not yet been forgiven, thus Peter’s command that they be baptized.

## **Some LESSONS for Us**

**LIVE the truth...** We never know who is watching. Cornelius was blessed by having seen and known those who showed the truth by the way they lived.

**TEACH the truth...** Truth can be ignored if it is not taught and made plain.

**OBEY the truth...** Those who witness truth being lived and who are taught the truth must obey the truth if they are to be saved by it.

**GOODNESS** is not equal to salvation. It appears that Cornelius was an exceptionally good man, but he had not yet obeyed the commands of God for salvation. He and the others were commanded to be baptized. It was not a suggestion, an option, an idea, but a command. Thus, it was necessary for salvation.

**LET GOD RULE** regarding salvation. Cornelius was a very good man; it appeared that he was in very good standing with God. However, God directed His spokesman Simon Peter to teach this good man Cornelius that his obedience was not yet complete. Hopefully, we can see that we need to just be sure that we are faithfully teaching God’s Word, and then we can relax and let Him rule on all salvation decisions, which, by the way, will last for eternity! †



# The Essence of Christianity

Jerry Bates

What is the true essence of Christianity? How would you summarize it in one sentence? I once read a book in which the author declared that most Christians have a radical misunderstanding of what Christianity is really all about. He suggested that if you were to ask the average person sitting in a worship service on Sunday morning to summarize the

message of Christianity, you would most likely hear something like, “The message of Christianity is that God loves me enough to send His son to die for me.” At first, you might wonder what would be wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with it, as far as it goes. However, it is incomplete. If the spirit of Christianity is that God loves me, what is the object of Christianity? **Me!** Christianity’s object is **me!** Thus, I make plans for my life that is best for **my** family and **me**. I serve God as it is convenient for **me** and comfortable for **me**, without much suffering and sacrifice. I look for a church that best fits **me**, one that caters to **my** wants and **my** desires. I want a worship that tickles **my** ears and stirs **my** emotions and makes **me** feel good about **myself**. I want a preacher that is entertaining, and programs that entertain and care for **my** children. Christianity is suddenly all about **me**.

The author continued to state that this version of Christianity is not biblical. He pronounced that the real essence of Christianity is, “God loves me so that I might make Him — His ways, His glory, and His greatness — known among all nations.” This version makes God the object. Isn’t that concept much more biblical? It is true that God sent His son to die for me, but He did not do it just to exalt me. He created the world and everyone and everything in it to glorify and exalt Himself.

Consider some passages that speak of the above announcement. In Ezekiel 36, the prophet announces that God was going to once again bless Israel. However, notice verse 22. “*Thus says the Lord God: ‘I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake...’*” A similar statement is made in verse 32, when Ezekiel writes, “*‘Nor for your sake do I do this,’ says the Lord God, ‘let this be known to you.’*” God was not blessing Israel just for Israel’s sake, but He was

blessing it so that the other nations of the world would come to glorify Him.

In Psalm 106, the psalmist was praising God for delivering Israel from Egyptian slavery. Notice what the psalmist declared in verse 8. *“Nevertheless he saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power known.”* Even in the popular Psalm 23, we find similar words. *“He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His names’ sake.”* The Bible often proclaims that God performs mighty works in order to promote His own honor and glory. In Psalm 79:9, we find these words, *“Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name’s sake!”* The psalmist prays for God’s forgiveness, but twice he stated that the basis of the forgiveness was not himself but for God’s holy name.

We all remember the promise that God made to Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham due to his faithfulness, and we usually think of this covenant as benefitting Abraham and his descendants. That is certainly true, but it was more. The last of that promise written in Genesis 12:3 told Abraham that *“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* Thus, we see that this blessing was not just for Abraham, but so that Abraham could be a blessing to everyone else.

We see similar ideas found in the New Testament. In 1 Peter 2, we find Peter using Old Testament terminology to depict the New Testament church. In verse 9, Peter used four terms with Old Testament roots to describe Christians. We are a *“chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and His own special people.”* These terms carry profound meanings and contain great blessings. Nevertheless, these great blessings were not given just for our benefit. They were given to us so that we *“may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”* In other words, we were blessed so that we might be a blessing to other people and to praise and glorify God in the midst of the darkness in which we live.

We need to be careful of our view of God. It is easy for us to concentrate so much on the love of God, which indeed is very great, that we distort the true message of Christianity. The focus of Christianity is not me; it must be **God**. Through Christ we enjoy great blessings, but this was not done just for me. It was done so that we could magnify the name of God and be a blessing to everyone else.

Some may think at this point that this makes God selfish. If all of God’s works are done just to magnify Himself, then it is selfishness and not love at all. On the other hand, we should ask, “Who else should He exalt?” Should God exalt the world? Should God exalt us? Everything is simply the creation of God and not worthy of exaltation. God is the only One worthy of honor and exaltation. *“Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name **alone** is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven”* (Psalm 148:13). May we never forget who we are worshipping and why we are worshipping the God who made us! †



## *The Rumbling of Grumbling*

**Louis Rushmore**

One translation of the English Bible often uses the word “murmur” (KJV) or some form of that word, whereas another translation uses some form of the words “grumble” or “complain” (NKJV). How serious is this condition of murmuring, grumbling or complaining? Well, evidently murmuring, grumbling or complaining is a common **sin** that is often characteristic of the children of God. Of course, any sin of which we are guilty and for which we do not repent will condemn our souls and prevent us from enjoying eternity in heaven (Romans 6:23). Therefore, we need to look more closely at the sin of murmuring, grumbling or complaining so that we can be better Christians.

The Greek verb *gogguzo* means “to mutter, murmur, grumble, say anything in a low tone” (*Vine’s*). It means “to express one’s discontent” (*Greek-English Lexicon*). For instance, this is what the workers did in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. “*And when they had received it, they complained [“murmured” KJV] against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day’*” (Matthew 20:11-12 NKJV). Likewise, this is what the Pharisees did, too. “*And their scribes and the Pharisees complained [“murmured” KJV] against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’*” (Luke 5:30 NKJV). In addition, the Jews did this toward Jesus Christ as well. “*The Jews then complained [“murmured” KJV] about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven’*” (John 6:41 NKJV). Even our Lord’s disciples did this about Him. “*When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained [“murmured” KJV] about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you?’*” (John 6:61 NKJV).

The apostle Paul cautioned Christians at Corinth in the first century not to grumble, because for grumbling God destroyed many Israelites during the wilderness wandering. “[N]or complain [“murmur” KJV], as some of them also complained [“murmured” KJV], and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Corinthians 10:10 NKJV). Merely grumbling is a serious offense before Almighty God! Faithful Christians are not grumblers.

The Greek verb *diagogguzo* means “to murmur through” such as through a crowd, and it “is always used of indignant complaining” (*Vine’s*). One can easily sense the disgust in the complaints in these two passages. “*And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them’*” (Luke 15:2 NKJV). “*But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner’*” (Luke 19:7).

Then, the Greek noun *gongusmos* means “a murmuring, muttering... in the sense of secret debate among people... displeasure or complaining (more privately than in public)” (*Vine’s*). This Greek noun is in the following texts. “*And there was much complaining [“murmuring” KJV] among the people concerning Him. Some said, ‘He is good’; others said, ‘No, on the contrary, He deceives the people’*” (John 7:12). “*Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint [“murmuring” KJV] against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution*” (Acts 6:1). “*Do all things without complaining [“murmuring” KJV] and disputing*” (Philippians 2:14). “*Disputing*” comes from the Greek *dialogismos* and means “debating”; its presence in the verse emphasizes the subject under consideration. Complaining or grumbling is cowardly since it is “secret displeasure, not openly avowed” (*Thayer’s*). The apostle Peter provided this inspired warning: “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling [“grudging” KJV]*” (1 Peter 4:9).

Another Greek noun *gongustes* means “a murmurer... one who complains... especially perhaps of utterances against God” (*Vine’s*). This person is “one who has a **habit** of complaining or grumbling” (*Greek-English Lexicon* emphasis added). Notice a passage in which this usage occurs. “*These are grumblers [“murmurers” KJV], complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage*” (Jude 16). Incidentally, “*complainers*” here comes from another Greek word (*mempsimoiros*) defined as “blaming fate, i.e. querulous (discontented)” (*Strong’s*).

It is a serious matter to be a grumbler or a complainer. Using still another word group (*stenazo*), God through James instructs: “*Do not grumble [“grudge” KJV] against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!*” (James 5:9-10 NKJV). Remember, God through the apostle Peter commands: “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling*”

(1 Peter 4:9). Listen to our Lord: “*Jesus therefore answered and said to them, ‘Do not murmur among yourselves’*” (John 6:43).

Did you notice that the reason for which one grumbles or complains does not matter? Grumbling or complaining is condemned no matter why one chooses to do it. Even if one’s complaint had to do with doctrinal error, it would still be wrong to murmur, grumble or complain about it in a secretive, cowardly way. When sound doctrine is compromised, for instance, one must boldly defend the Gospel (Philippians 1:7, 17; Titus 1:9; Romans 16:17). Christians are forbidden to be murmurers, grumblers or complainers.

How can we apply what we have learned? Talking against someone quietly rather than openly is not Christ-like. Differences between people (e.g., races, tribes, nationalities, economic status, academic levels, politics, personalities, etc.) are not to be the subjects of dissension discussed between Christians about each other. If we truly try to be Christ-like in imitating His love for mankind (John 15:13), we will genuinely love the brotherhood (Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:17). Then, we will not be guilty of murmuring, grumbling or complaining. “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart*” (1 Peter 1:22). Putting 1 Peter 1:22 into practice in our lives, we cannot possibly be murmurers, grumblers or complainers about fellow Christians! †

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# A Remarkable Sacrifice

Mike Hinton

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940, thirty-seven merchant ships forming a convoy HX84 set sail from Halifax, Nova Scotia. The lone escort for the convoy was the *HMS Jervis Bay*, a 14,000 ton armed merchant cruiser. Originally a passenger liner, the *Jervis Bay* had recently been refitted with seven obsolete “six inch” guns and a few anti-aircraft weapons. She bore a crew of 259 men under the command of Captain Edward Fegen.

Nine days into the dangerous passage across the icy North Atlantic, the convoy was intercepted by the German “pocket battleship” *Admiral Scheer*. The vast superiority in speed and armament of the German battleship left little doubt as to the fate of the lumbering merchant ships. The only thing standing between convoy HX84 and certain annihilation was the *Jervis Bay*.

*Admiral Scheer*’s eleven inch guns began hurling 600 pound high explosive projectiles at the convoy at a range of eight miles. Captain Fegen quickly ordered the convoy to disperse and scatter while dropping smoke floats in the water to screen the convoy’s movements from the enemy. Then without hesitation he ordered the helm to close the distance with the *Admiral Scheer* at maximum speed.

The *Jervis Bay* began firing her guns to force the German raider to deal with her first. However, though her shells fell far short, she was well within range of the *Admiral Scheer*’s guns. A shell hit near the bridge, wrecking both the helm and gunnery fire control, and tearing off Captain Fegen’s arm. Battered and bleeding, he stayed at his post directing the battle until another shell killed him and most of the remaining officers.

The one sided battle lasted for only about 24 minutes. The *Jervis Bay* lay dead in the water and sinking after suffering the loss of one hundred and ninety men. The *Admiral Scheer* had not been touched by the *Jervis Bay*’s guns. Yet, her valiant sacrifice had purchased sufficient time for the freighters of HX84 that only five of them were sunk. For his gallantry, Captain Fegen was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain’s highest award for valour.

The officers and crew of the *HMS Jervis Bay* deserve to be honored and remembered. Jesus offered a commentary on such sacrifices in John 15:13 where He noted, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Yet, we are the favored recipients of a sacrifice far more remarkable

## GOD

than that of the crew of the *Jervis Bay*.

Paul noted in Romans 5:7 that it is unusual for someone to willingly sacrifice himself even for a worthy cause. Then, in verses 8-10 he goes on to remind us that Christ died for us while we were *enemies* of God because of our sin. The crew of the *Jervis Bay* sacrificed themselves to save friends... countrymen... allies. Jesus died for the men who were killing Him... and for those who declare Him dead or irrelevant today. That is truly a sacrifice worth remembering! †

**Mike Hinton is a worker for the Lord in Blanchard, Oklahoma, USA.**

# A Sad Bible Verse

**Ernest S. Underwood**

There are two verses in the 8th chapter of Jeremiah that tell us something about the condition of Judah in that time period. In verse 5, the Lord asks, "*Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?*" Verse 20 tells us of the condition of those of whom Jeremiah wrote. It states, "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!*"

These people had experienced the special love of God. In the summer of God's care for them, they had on the whole committed spiritual adultery by worshipping other gods. When the time of harvest came, they could bring nothing to the Lord of Harvest. Their terrible plight was that they were not saved, and the context of Chapter 20 gives the reasons. As a result of their unfaithfulness and backsliding, they were sent into captivity for seventy long years.

Today, God has given us His wonderful and precious Word. By learning, obeying, and living by that Word, we can have our sins remitted and have the hope of the eternal home. Yet, many, like the Jews of that day, are lost and seem so unconcerned. One day the summer will be gone; the time to obey (harvest) will pass, and many will awaken to the awful realization that they are not saved. Sadly, they will meet their Maker in this condition. Are you saved – saved according to the directions found in God's Word? †

**Ernest S. Underwood has been a missionary to India and the Ukraine. He preaches for the College Avenue church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.**

## GOD

# Knowing His Name

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

Knowing God's name will guarantee the fulfillment of His promises. "*Trust in the Lord... and feed on His faithfulness*" (Psalm 37:3). God's promises are dated in His own sovereign will and purpose. "*He is faithful who promised*" (Hebrews 10:23).

If knowing His name assures our trust in Him, then it follows that we need to know His name. Every name of God is itself a promise. His name "Jehovah" was capitalized LORD in the King James Version more than 6,000 times. "Jehovah" (Yahweh) was the covenant name of the God of Israel. Other names like "Elohim" (God, Genesis 1:1) is found 2,570 times, "Adonai" (Lord) is found 134 times, and "Shaddai" (Almighty) 39 times.

He is JEHOVAH-JIREH, "The Lord who provides." In Genesis 22:14, "*Abraham called the place Jehovah-Jireh as it is said to this day, in the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.*" A dramatic story of great faith emerges from this passage. In the context Abraham was in the process of offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice. But God stayed his hand, and provided a substitute — a ram, and Isaac was spared. This story foreshadowed another event that would occur many years later in that same vicinity when God provided the Lamb (His own Son) as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins.

Jehovah-Jireh is the God of providence. To know this name is to trust Him to provide. The implications for Christians are many.

1. First, Jehovah-Jireh is seen in God's provision for our greatest need — redemption and forgiveness for our sin. Sin is the universal malady, for "*all have sinned*" (Romans 3:23). God provided the propitiation — satisfaction (Romans 3:26). How could God be just with reference to sin, and merciful toward the sinner? Man had nothing to offer! But, God provided the propitiation through the offering of His own perfect Son, who took our place and died in our stead. He took our sentence, our separation, and our shame. God provided the Redeemer and the Ransom — thus providing the Person, and the plan for our redemption.
2. Second, Jehovah-Jireh provides for your life and needs. Peter said, "*Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). Paul assured the Philippians, "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches*

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*in glory by Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 4:19). He provides the Shepherd to guide us (John 10:10,11); the High Priest to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25); and the Friend who will never forsake us.

To know His name is to trust Him. Whatever your need, He will meet it, whether comfort, strength, victory, confidence, or encouragement — He provides. Trust Him! †

**Clarence DeLoach, Jr. has preached for many years and now lives in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.**

### **Who Was He?**

#### **Roger Rush**

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, "*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*" They replied, "*Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.*" "*But what about you?*" he asked. "*Who do you say I am?*" Simon Peter answered, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Jesus replied, "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" (Matthew 16:13-19).

Peter offered the definitive answer. Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Peter had not learned this from some other man, but from God Himself. Exactly how this revelation may have been given to Peter is not stated, but the truth of our Lord's identity is not a matter of doubt for Peter, nor should it be for us.

Everything we know about Jesus validates Peter's confession. In addition to Peter's confession and the Lord's own acknowledgment that He was the Son of God, we have the testimony of John the Baptist. Further, on at least three occasions the voice of God was heard from heaven proclaiming Jesus as His Son. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the Messiah, and what He did and said gave proof of who He was (John 5:30-39).

How important is His divinity? It was on the basis of His divinity that He would build His church. The church rests on the bedrock foundation that Jesus is the Son of God. There is no other foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). The church was not built by or upon Peter. He was given the keys to the kingdom or church, which he used to open the gates to all (Acts 2, 10). He was not the first head of the church. The church has but one head, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18). There are many sincere people who still do not understand these fundamental truths.

Make no mistake; Jesus is the Son of God. Believe and obey Him to enjoy endless bliss. Reject him, and there is no hope. †

# Idol Talk

**Bill Dillon**

Man is a worshipping being. Departing from divine guidance, he succumbed to giving homage to birds, bulls, and crocodiles, as well as the sun, moon, and mythical creatures. So numerous have been the idols of man that scarcely is there a created object that has not, at one time or other, received human veneration. The Bible comments on man's idolatrous habits in Romans 1:25, "*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.*"



Idolatry is rendering ultimate devotion to an object of limited value. In ancient Israel, idolatry brought grief and shame (Jeremiah 11:13; Hosea 9:10), and was punishable by physical death (Exodus 22:20).

Our society today is filled "brim full and running over" with multiplied idols, not all of which are made of wood and stone:

Covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The shrine of prosperity and possessions has many devotees. Sadly, an inordinate desire for wealth has proven to be a cause of spiritual stum-

bling to many. The Bible says, "*The love of money is the root of all evil*" (1 Timothy 6:10).

A life of ease is idolatry. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" The cross is not made of feathers and wrapped in velvet, sometimes it's more like lead wrapped in sandpaper!

Worldly pleasure is idolatry. Unfortunately for its followers, it is a fading idol, lasting only "*for a season*" (Hebrews 11:25). True happiness endures forever, for "*in thy presence is fullness of joy*" (Psalm 16:11).

Compromising the truth is idolatry. This idol sits on the great, benevolent lap of those who prize peace at any price. It's easy for people who believe nothing to agree on anything. Paul wrote, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort...*" (2 Timothy 4:2), and "*Hold fast the faithful word*" (Titus 1:9).

Anything that dethrones God from the heart is idolatry. God says, "*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me*" (Isaiah 45:5). Are you an idolater? †

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# Syncretism

Cecil May, Jr.

Syncretism is defined as, “the union of conflicting beliefs, especially religious beliefs.” It fits the spirit of this post-modern age but is offensive to God.

Worship of the true and living God while also paying homage to other “gods” is stoutly condemned in Scripture. God said, *“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt; you shall have no other gods before me....You shall not bow down to (idols) or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God”* (Exodus 20:3-5).

It may seem strange that “jealousy” is ascribed to God. The word has mainly negative connotations when attributed to humans. But so does “wrath”, and Scripture often attributes wrath to God as well. *“The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies”* (Nahum 1:2).

Jealousy, speaking humanly, is most frequently charged in marriage and is a negative characteristic only when it reflects unjustified suspicion. A spouse ought to be jealous of anyone or anything which tries to insinuate itself into the place only a spouse ought to have. Marriage is an exclusive relationship, and ev-

ery husband or wife ought to be jealous to protect that exclusivity.

In saying He is a jealous God, the Lord is demanding an exclusive place of worship and obedience. The first and greatest commandment is, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”* (Mark 12:30). That leaves no place for a rival.

In the prophets, God often calls idolatry among His people “adultery” and “whoredom”. Similarly, just as a man feels when his wife sleeps with another man, but to an infinitely greater degree, God feels when those He has redeemed worship other gods.

Zephaniah said God will *“cut off from this place...those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom”* (1:4,5). Milcom was the *“god of the Ammonites”* (1 Kings 11:33). Significantly, the inspired scribe who wrote 1 Kings also calls him *“the abomination of the Ammonites”* (11:5). Worship of God is nullified when other gods are acknowledged and worshipped as well.

Christ and Christianity did not change that. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the light. No one comes to the Father except by me”* (John 14:6). †

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

# Eyes



### Betty Burton Choate

I examined a beautiful ceramic doll, delicately painted and elaborately dressed. Her eyes were so well done I could almost imagine that they could see. I looked for the name of the artist, knowing that it had to be a person of outstanding ability.

Yes, the doll was made by an accomplished artist. And since the doll was not alive, of course those beautiful eyes could not see.

I turned around and picked up my baby — soft and warm, a living, moving being. I looked into her beautiful eyes and saw recognition and love.

But I saw only the blue eyes, ringed by dark lashes and set into a cherub's face. I couldn't look into the depths of the amazing organs

themselves — *two* eyes, but working as *one*, to transmit a single image to the brain.

Consider this: In the very small space of the eyeball, electrical connections can simultaneously — and at the speed of 300 miles an hour — transmit 1 1/2 million messages to the brain! Light passing through the cornea is focused by the lens onto the retina. The retina, an area less than one square inch, is composed of ten layers, in which are 137 million cells. One hundred and thirty million of these cells are shaped like rods, allowing black and white vision. Seven million of these special cells are cone shaped, and these allow us to see the world in color.



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These 137 million cells, connected to the optic nerve, transmit the light-messages, in the form of electrical impulses, to the brain. The eyes, themselves, though on the surface of the face, do not “see”. And the brain, encased in its ivory tower of bone, cannot “see”. But through the millions of light-sensitive cells in the retina, electrical signals are sent to the brain at the speed of 300 miles an hour. The brain instantly interprets the signals and “sees” what the eyes “saw”.

Almost all living things have eyes. They are similarly set into each face, whether it be an insect, an animal, or a human, and are recognizable as eyes. Their function is much the same in all cases — to enable the creature to “see”.

But, though there must be millions of eyes, none are alike. A trained scientist in the field can readily distinguish between the eyes of a human, a cat, a cow, a bird, a turtle, or a grasshopper, not only by appearance but by the peculiarity of internal components and design. Even further, like fingerprints, one human’s eyes are like no other. Even identical twins do not share the same pattern in the make-up of the retina, enabling retinal scanning to become a reliable means of identification.

Can we look at such wonders, such marvels of design, such varied organs so perfectly fitted to the individual needs, and doubt that there was an artist (or a “scientist”) with skills beyond comparison who created each one?

What kind of stupid — or mentally blind — person would adamantly declare, in the face of reality and common sense, that a ceramic doll simply evolved itself into existence? And what kind of stupid — or mentally blind — person would adamantly declare, in the face of reality and common sense, that hundreds of millions of ingeniously designed and precisely fitted working parts in the human eye simply evolved themselves into existence — twice, in the same head?

And those who would espouse and promote such a ridiculous idea are *the elite of our scientific world???* Really???

†

**Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, longtime missionaries in Asia.**

**I will lift up my eyes to the hills – From whence comes my help?  
My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.  
He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will  
not slumber. ... The LORD is your shade at your right hand. The  
sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night. The  
LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your  
soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming  
in from this time forth, and even forevermore (Psalm 121:1-8).**

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## THE WORD OF GOD

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# STAY ON THE COURSE!

### Hans J. Dederscheck

Suppose that anywhere in the world on the equatorial line, a pilot decides to take off 20 degrees north-northwest. He stays on this course, never correcting his flight position. Would our pilot come out at a point he thought of, or would his airplane put him totally out of course?

Our life needs a fixed course and a constant control and correction of our walk toward the goal. Marketing campaigners had to learn that there is always the possibility of unexpected interference that requires a permanent control and rectification of the program in execution.

Christians may learn a lesson from these two examples. It is so easy to get off the course to heaven if we do not consult continuously the map of travel — the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The other day my wife copied a recipe from a television show and prepared a colorful, delicious meal we enjoyed greatly. The next time, she changed the original prescriptions just a little bit and the flavor was different. We just got another meal!

Christ warns us to watch and stay in His teaching, staying on the road and in His Word. *“Do not go beyond what is written”* (1 Corinthians 4:6 NIV). We shall not add to nor take away from God’s Word (Revelation 22:18,19). People are invited to calculate if they have the things to follow the Lord (Luke 17:10; 16:16; 6:47-49). Following Christ signifies a thoughtful and watchful life in action (Luke 14:28-30).

Liberalism is a deadly enemy for Christians because it steers believers away from the right course. Changing God’s Word will result equally into the conditions of the altered recipe.

If someone follows the example of our pilot, his course will bring him away out of the original calculated flight direction. If we want to stay on the course, we need to check the indications of journey given in the Gospel. If we do not check daily, we will end up in a place we never established as the final destination of our trip throughout life. God gave us His guide, the Gospel, and we have to follow His instructions. Are you still on the right course toward heaven? †

**Hans J. Dederscheck is an evangelist in the country of Austria.**

# Is the Old Testament Binding?

E. Claude Gardner

From 1796 the State of Tennessee has had three constitutions. The current one has some of the same items as were in the first two. Even so, the one in force now is the only one that guides the state. Likewise, the Bible has had two testaments. The New Testament includes matters that were in the Old Testament. For instance, the New Testament has nine of the ten commandments. It does not include Sabbath-keeping. The Old Testament is “dead” for this dispensation. It was a covenant for the Jews and not for the rest: the Gentiles.

Christians can and should read and study the 39 books of the Old Testament. It tells about the creation, history of God’s dealing with man for several hundred years, and it gives principles and examples that are beneficial. The apostle Paul wrote of one purpose when he said, “*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning.*” (Romans 15:4). Many examples of obedience, courage, faith, and patience are for our “learning.” Another purpose is that it was a tutor to bring humanity to Christ. “*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith*” (Galatians 3:24). Then he states, “... *we are no longer under a tutor,*” which is the Old Testament law.

The New Testament is prolific in declaring that it has replaced the old for divine authority in this age. Three illustrations make it abundantly clear that the law (Old Testament) is dead.

(1) This was illustrated by marriage. After a woman’s husband dies “*she is free from that law.*” His application was, “*Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another to Him who was raised from the dead...But now we have been delivered from the law...*” (Romans 7:3-6). Yes, the Old Testament is dead.

(2) The second illustration is described in Galatians 4:21-31. The bondwoman and the freewoman represent the two covenants, one from Sinai and the other from Jerusalem, which are the old covenant and the new covenant. He concludes by stating, “*So then brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free*” (Galatians 4:31). Again, it is seen that we are committed to the new and not the old.

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(3) Paul contrasts “*the ministry of death*” with the “*ministry of the Spirit*” (2 Corinthians 3:7-17). He declares that the old and first covenant was “*glorious*”, but the new was “*much more glorious*”. The Old Testament had many glorious events, but it was replaced by a better law. The writer of Hebrews taught that Christ is the Mediator “*of a better covenant, which was established on better promises*” (8:6).

Indisputable Bible passages are clear that the law was replaced by the New Testament. Paul wrote, “*...we are not under the law but under grace*” (Romans 3:15). Again, the writer of Hebrews states, “*for the priesthood being changed there is made of necessity a change also of the law*” (7:12).

The law of Moses served its purpose, and then, God gave a new covenant. Jesus said after His resurrection, “*These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me*” (Luke 24:44).

When did the old covenant (Old Testament) cease to bind us as to what we teach? It happened when Christ was crucified on the cross. “*And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*” (Colossians 2:14). Paul said that Christ “*has broken down the middle wall of partition*” (Ephesians 2:14). The Law of Moses was given to the Jews only, but now Christ in the new covenant includes all Gentiles of the world and Jews. He came to “*reconcile both to God in one body through the cross*” (Ephesians 2:16). This is described in Hebrews 9:11-22.

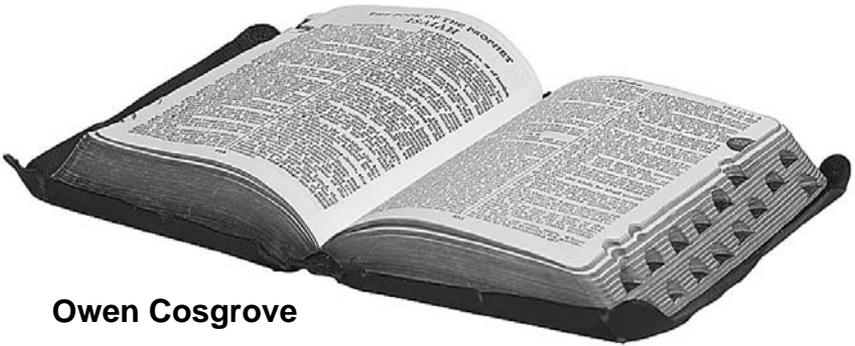
Those who want to go by the Old Testament should realize that if they keep one of the laws, they are bound to observe all of them. Here are some of the Old Testament practices they must observe: animal sacrifices, circumcision, priesthood, Sabbath, Passover Feast, and more. If they choose to have instrumental music in worship as in the Old, then they must accept all of the practices. Why keep the Sabbath today and fail to have burnt offering of animals?

The 39 Old Testament books were given to the Jews and never to Gentiles. God has blessed all mankind to enter the “one body.” Paul wrote, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:27,28).

The Book of Galatians gives a thorough discussion of the superiority of the New over the Old. Also, Hebrews does the same. †

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Owen Cosgrove

# Great People Speak of the Greatest Book

**Daniel Webster:** I have read the Bible through many times, and now make it a practice to read it through once every year. It is a book of all others for lawyers, as well as divines; and I pity the man who cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and of the rules for conduct.

**Horace Greeley:** It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom.

**Benjamin Franklin:** A Bible and a newspaper in every house, a good school in every district — all studied and appreciated as they merit — are the principal support of virtue, morality, and civil liberty.

**U.S. Grant:** Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted to all of the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. *“Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.”*

**Samuel Coleridge:** I know the Bible is inspired because it finds me at greater depths of my being than any other book.

**Isaac Newton:** We account the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy. I find more sure works of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatever.

**Woodrow Wilson:** When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the

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Word of God, because you will have found the key to your own heart, your own happiness, and your own duty.

**John Q. Adams:** So great is my veneration for the Bible, that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country and respectable members of society.

**Napoleon:** The Gospel is not merely a book — it is a living power — a book surpassing all others — I never omit to read it, and every day with the same pleasure. Nowhere is to be found such a series of beautiful ideas, and admirable moral maxims, which pass before us like the battalions of a celestial army... The soul can never go astray with this book as its guide.

**Helen Keller:** Just as all things upon earth represent and image forth all the realities of another world, so the Bible is one mighty representative of the whole spiritual life of humanity.

**Francis Bacon:** There never was found in any age of the world, either religion or law, that did so highly exalt the public good as the Bible.

**John Milton:** There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion; no orations equal to those of the prophets; and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach.

**John Locke:** The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men — it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter. It is all pure, all sincere, nothing too much, nothing wanting.

**Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe:** It is a belief in the Bible, the fruit of deep meditation, which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life. I have found it a capital safely invested, and richly productive in interest.

**Abraham Lincoln:** Accept all of the Bible you can by reason and the rest by faith, and you will be a better person. †

Owen Cosgrove (1932-2011) was involved in printed evangelism in many countries.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16,17*

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# “All Things Work Together For Good”

Jimmy Young

Paul wrote of comfort and hope to the church in Rome: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). We live in hope and comfort as Christians. Yes, I know our surroundings would tell us something different, but God gives us the hope we have through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. All that is negative in this life is seen to have a positive purpose in the execution of God’s eternal purpose. The negative things that seem to frustrate God’s purpose work to serve its accomplishment. The result is that nothing in life can bring absolute harm to the faithful Christian.

How is this a certainty? We know it by faith, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10: 17). The Bible does not contrast faith and knowledge, but faith and sight: *“For we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Corinthians 5:7). One who has true faith has true knowledge.

Paul tells us that all things work for good. Even the dark things in life work for good to the faithful. *“And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth”* (Genesis 42:5,6). *“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance”* (Genesis 45:7). Life does not consist in an abundance of good things (Luke 12:15). We can profit from the dark things in life, too (Psalm 119:71). We have a lot of bright things to thank God for (Philippians 2:12-18). These verses set forth a positive view in a negative world. We should be joyful, and by doing so, we prove our faith and trust (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

Things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose. Under God’s control, all things work like a prescription. I will admit that all things may not seem to work together — they may not seem to work together for good. What is good? It isn’t mere happiness. That which draws one closer to God is good, and what draws one from God is bad.

All things work together for good to those who love God. How do we know we love God? It is as simple as A B C; we keep His commandments (1 John 5:13;

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John 14:15). Let us not forget this big stipulation — we must love one another, too (1 John 4:7-11). We must not only love one another, we also are to love the lost (Matthew 28:18-20).

All things work together to those who are called according to His purpose. How are we called? This is a most important question. Many are waiting for that “special” voice or “sign” that they can interpret as a call from God. We (all people) are called by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). His purpose is set forth in Ephesians 1:9-11: *“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”* God’s fore-knowledge and providence make all things work for good for His children. †

**Jimmy Young works with the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.**

### Dig Deep

**Mark McWhorter**

In Luke 6:47-49, Jesus says that a man should listen to His words. He is not talking about just letting the words fall on one’s ears. Just because a person is within hearing distance, and just because he is looking at the person talking, does not mean he is actually attempting to think about what is being spoken. The same holds true for reading. Just because one allows his eyes to scan across words on a page, does not mean that one is actually reading and thinking about those words.

When Jesus said we are to “*hear*” His sayings, He means that, whether we are listening to someone teach or preach, or whether we are reading our Bible, we should think and contemplate on the words. Effort must be put forth in studying God’s Word. Knowledge and wisdom of His Word does not magically come to us.

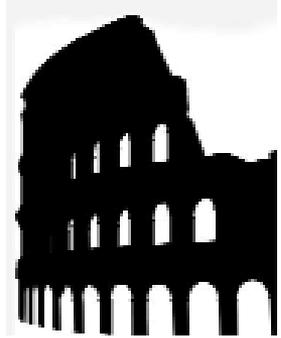
In the referenced text, Jesus compares hearing with digging. In verse forty-eight, He says that the man who listens and does His Word is like the man who digs deep and lays the foundation of a house. Listening properly is digging deep. A house must have a proper foundation. That foundation must be solid. The foundation of a house in many Bible lands was set on rock. Thus, a person many times had to dig deep through sand and soil to find the rock.

We find the spiritual Rock, Jesus, by digging deep in the Scriptures. We must read and study. We must contemplate and meditate on His Word. As we build our spiritual house bigger, we must continue to find more rock. We should always be building a bigger spiritual house. Thus, we should always be studying and learning more from God’s Word. †



## Romans 12:1-8

**Jerry Bates**



1. Even though Paul was an apostle, how did he approach the Roman Christians? (v. 1)
2. What kind of sacrifices do Christians offer?(v. 1)
3. What does this say about the kind of life Christians are to live? (v. 1)
4. What does it mean to be transformed? (v. 2)
5. How are we transformed? (v. 2)
6. What three things are said about the will of God? (v. 2)
7. How does Paul say we should think about ourselves? (v. 3)
8. Does this condemn all measures of pride and confidence in one's self?
9. To what does Paul compare the church? (v. 4)
10. What lesson is Paul intending to teach by using this illustration? (vs. 4-5)
11. Where did we receive whatever abilities we have? (v. 6)
12. What are we supposed to do with those gifts? (v. 6)
13. Is any one gift more important or valuable than another?
14. The most surprising gift mentioned is giving, because we normally do not think of this as a gift. Can you think of two ways giving might be considered a gift? (v. 8)
15. Leaders are to lead with diligence. What does that mean? (v. 8)
16. What would be included in the gift of showing mercy? (v. 8)
17. What attitude should we have in showing mercy?  
(see the back cover for answer)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 for as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches in teaching; 8 he who exhorts in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

NOTES: This is a short, compact section with great truths discussed therein. Paul begins this section with an exhortation for all Christians to live holy lives in service to God. The imagery is that of the Old Testament animal sacrifices. We also offer sacrifices, but our sacrifices are our very lives lived in daily worship and service to God. We can do this only by having our minds renewed by the will of God.

In the second part of this section, Paul encourages us to use our abilities in service to God. We all have some ability. None of us can say, "I have no ability; I can do nothing." Certainly, some have more abilities than others, and none of us have exactly the same abilities. However, just as our physical bodies have many parts, each having a different function, yet all contributing to the health and welfare of the body, so each one as individual members of the one body of Christ, the church (Ephesians 1:22), contributes to the proper functioning and growth of the body of Christ.

Since these gifts were given by God, we should not be guilty of boasting about what we can do. Man often attributes more importance to some functions than others; however, there is no indication that God thinks of one gift as any more valuable than another. We will each receive the same reward as long we are faithful in using whatever gifts we have. We are all God's fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:8-9).

# *Please Don't Turn Back!*

**Maxie B. Boren**

One of the saddest contexts in the New Testament, in my opinion, is the sixth chapter of John. Not because of the great miracle of feeding the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes (verses 1-14). That was anything but sad. It filled a benevolent need and furnished indisputable proof that Jesus was in fact the Son of God. And not because of the subsequent miracle of the Lord's walking on the water as the disciples crossed over the Sea of Galilee (verses 15-21). That incident wasn't sad, and undoubtedly further convinced the closest of the disciples of the power of Jesus. Neither was it sad because of the profound teachings in Capernaum concerning His being the "bread of life" (verses 22-40).

To me it is a sad context because (1) of the way the Jews reacted in obvious disbelief and with murmuring (verses 41-50), and more especially, (2) because many of His own disciples turned back, "*and walked no more with Him*" (verses 60-66). Now that, to me, is very sad! Don't you just know that must have broken the heart of Jesus! So much so, I believe, that He then rather pathetically asked the twelve, "*Will ye also go away?*" (verse 67).

When today I am made aware of so many members of the church who once were faithful and true, but who have now turned back from the Lord Jesus and His way of truth, in one way or another, it breaks my heart! I think of how the Lord must have felt at that time recorded in John 6, and I realize that He must surely feel the same way today when any of His disciples turn back. Reflecting once again on that question Jesus asked so long ago...it's almost like I can hear Him asking it again. I quickly remember with thanksgiving that the apostle Peter responded to the Lord in a positive way, by saying, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (verses 68,69). And I too want to cry out in similar fashion in answer to that question, "No, Lord, I will not go away from thee! I will never turn my back on thee!"

I plead with brethren, "Let us all resolve to remain faithful and true to our Lord. Let us never turn away from Him. Let us never leave the "old paths" of truth and right" (read Jeremiah 6:16a, John 14:6, Matthew 16:13-18, Ephesians 4:4-6, Jude 3, etc.) And may we never forget another statement of Jesus: "*No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62). That should give us additional incentive! †

## SALVATION

# You Don't Have to Answer

**Jack W. Carter**

Parents usually expect the children to answer when they are questioned about their behavior. I wonder what we would do if we questioned one of our small children, and he responded with, “I don’t have to answer you.”

Now that we are adults, things are much different. We find considerable satisfaction in not having to answer for our behavior if we do not want to do so.

We can readily say to husbands or wives, “I don’t have to answer to you.” We can sit and hear a sermon that indicts our conduct and go right on with the conduct. There is nothing the preacher can do about it. We can say to the elders who might come to us expressing concern about our conduct, “I don’t have to answer to you.” We can say the same thing to friends.

What about answering to God? Does it seem strange to you that God didn’t plan for a way to personally confront us as a parent might when we have been disobedient and demand an immediate answer? For whatever reason, this is not the way our Heavenly Father chose to go about it.

One of the big mistakes we make in so often determining that we do not have to answer to other people is that we will never have to answer to anyone. Nothing could be further from the truth. Someday, we will be called upon to answer, and we will answer (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

God has chosen that there will be a day of answering. We might defy all humanity, but we can never defy Almighty God. The sad part about this approach is that it will be too late to say, “What I did was wrong, but I’ll do better now.” God expects us to know right from wrong and to behave accordingly. If someone who loves you calls your conduct into question, you might give serious thought to answering for that conduct. If you wait for God to call for an answer, it will be too late. †

**Jack W. Carter is a preacher living in McAlester, Oklahoma, USA.**

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I spoke with a surgeon the other day, and our conversation drifted to the special clothing he wears in surgery. Most, if not all, of that surgical garb is made of paper. I don't know if it's more expensive to use throw-away garments rather than washing cloth ones, but it

doesn't matter. The reason for using paper is not monetary, but sanitary. Dreaded diseases are often contagious and can be carried in contaminated clothes.

Leviticus 13 lists precautions that people were to take when they came in contact with a person who had leprosy. Verse 52 commands the burning of clothes worn by a leper. The risk of spreading this filthy, dreaded disease was too great to not destroy the clothes.

I've mentioned these things to spotlight the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse in Jude. The context is focused on bringing folks to repentance and salvation. Some, he says, should be saved "*with compassion*". That is, they will be converted easily without much talk of future damnation without repentance. Now verse 23: "*Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*"

What would it mean to "*hate the garment*" of the lost person? Sometimes the reason we fail in efforts to convert the lost is that we may be as worldly in some areas as they are! Do I display a hatred for sin that at its finish "*brings forth death*" (James 1:15)?

Let us ever resolve to love the sinner without forgetting to hate his sin. Without this hatred from faithful Christians, that sinner may never recognize the seriousness of his lost condition! When he lifts his eyes in hell, how will he remember you? If his sin is made clear to him, and he continues in it, he will always remember the efforts made to regain him.

Heaven, for ourselves and those about us, is our life's primary goal. May those living about us remember us from that blessed home. †

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

## SALVATION



# Skunks and Fleas

## Dalton Key

We often accuse the skunk of being an uncommonly stupid creature, but this is hardly the case. In fact, there is one sense in which he may be wiser than his human skeptics.

The skunk has devised an ingenious way to rid himself of fleas. First, he takes a mouthful of grass and then slowly wades into a stream until his muzzle is barely visible. The grass in his mouth gives him the appearance of having a large, bushy mustache. As the skunk submerges, the fleas are busy moving upward to get out of the water, until the dry stalks protruding from his mouth, are black with hundreds of the pesky insects. Our black and white friend then opens his mouth, releasing the grass along with his unwelcome guests to float harmlessly down stream. He rids himself of these itch-producing pests by placing them in an unfavorable environment.

Are we as wise as the skunk? Our sins are far more serious than a few fleas. Fleas produce an itch within the skin; sin causes spiritual sickness with the soul. If we are wise, we would hate our sins and desire freedom from them as much, ya even more, than the skunk desires freedom from the fleas.

We should hate sin with all our being, staying as far away from it as possible. The prophet Ezekiel wrote, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:20). Sin is so serious, so dangerous, that Christ came down from heaven and shed His blood that we might from sin be redeemed. Won't you, through Christ, rid yourself of sin's ugly consequences? You are as wise as a skunk, aren't you? †

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

## SALVATION

# Making the Heart the Source of Obedience

Michael L. King

The Spirit directed the apostle Paul to speak words worthy of being emulated in the life of every sincere child of God. In Romans 6:16-18, Paul depicted life as having two options, just as Jesus did in Matthew 7:13,14, describing the two gates, two ways, and two consequences. Paul gives emphasis to the fact that unless our response to God comes from a sincere heart (mind), it is of no value and will not be acknowledged. Who would want to receive gifts or be told words of endearment knowing the gifts were given only out of duty and the words were spoken with insincerity? Neither does God want us to respond to Him out of improper motivation or inconsistency with our lifestyle or the passions of our heart.

Obedience from the heart is manifested by a heart of intelligence. Notice qualifying words of significant passages in the Bible addressing this subject: *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7); *“Why do you reason these things in your hearts?”* (Mark 2:8); *“But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart”* (Luke 2:19); and *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness ...”* (Romans 10:10). The reader can quickly discern that emotions are involved, for the heart perpetrates love (Matthew 22:37).

Obedience that is from the heart is an “obedience of faith”. Obedience from the heart requires purpose, particularly so in terms of obedient giving, *“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). It would stand to reason that all other forms of response to God would require purpose and certainly be intentional as well. We might ask ourselves if our spirituality is permeated by “will power”.

In simple, saving faith is a loving response to God’s teaching (Romans 10:10). James gave great encouragement to his readers by saying, *“Blessed is the man ... when he has been approved”* (James 1:12). The importance of an intelligent and obedient response to God and His word is clearly taught in the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:5).

Likewise, in the parable of the sower, the seed was the Word of God, with some seed finding good lodging, *“...the ones that fell on good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart”* (Luke 8:15). Those who were saved

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and inducted into the New Testament church on the Day of Pentecost were those who “heard,” “cut to the heart,” “gladly received his word were baptized,” and “...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:36-41,47).

Not only is an intelligent response to be given to the Gospel, but a specific obedience is required as well. It is important to have a “heartfelt” spirituality, but the feelings of the heart must be congruent with God’s dictates. The hand on a compass is always drawn to magnetic north. When the one who possesses the compass moves, the hand always acclimates to the north position. This occurrence is always predictable and never changes with the passing of time or conditions.

The people of God should believe, worship, marry, be saved, and behave in general as those Christians of previous centuries, because the position of God on such matters has never changed. He always points us upward. We know that Jesus “...is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 11:8) and that with God “there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). This is speaking of God’s care for us and fulfillment of His promises, but the principle remains the same.

Notice in the very same context (verse 18), James informs that “*Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be the firstfruits of his creatures.*” Did you pick up on the fact that His will is the magnet of our spiritual compass that determines truth for every matter? Paul was inspired to write similar truth by saying, “...*though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*” (Romans 6:17,18).

The Corinthians were given the basic teaching of obedience (1 Corinthians 15:1-8), to which they were to tenaciously cling, for it contained their means of salvation. It was affirmed by Paul, as above mentioned, that salvation would come when they embraced the doctrine of Christ (Romans 6:17,18).

The nature and importance of repentance and entrance into Christ by baptism have been established (Romans 6:1-5). The baptism of a penitent believer is a burial in water, which is the likeness of the burial of Jesus (verses 3-5). Obedience from the heart allows one to be raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life in similitude to Jesus’ resurrection from the grave (verse 5). When one has “*obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine,*” the man living in bondage becomes “*alive unto God in Christ Jesus*” (verses 8,10,11). We can then say, “*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:57). †

**Michael L. King preaches for the New Albany congregation in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.**

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# *How to Know You Are Saved*

Jimmy Clark

*“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:13). This passage clearly sets forth the principle that the child of God who continues in faith can know that he/she is in a saved condition. While it is possible for the child of God to fall from grace if he/she leaves the faith (cf. Galatians 5:4), it is possible for the faithful child of God to know that he/she is saved and has eternal life. There is no greater need for assurance than to know that one is saved. However, the religious world is filled with deceived people who believe that they are saved with no real prospect of that being a reality in the current state that they are in. Consider three fundamental facts required for one to know.

**Authoritative Revelation Contacted.** Believing a lie does not make one saved. Paul wrote, *“And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Only the truth makes one free (cf. John 8:32). Truth is the word of God (cf. John 17:17). Mankind does not accidentally become saved or is saved through just any revelation. Salvation is of God (cf. Revelation 7:10) and man must come in contact with the Gospel to be saved (cf. Romans 1:16).

**Appropriate Reasoning Followed.** Mankind may contact the Word of God and still not be saved (cf. Hebrews 4:2). Man must reason correctly to see the truth of God’s Word. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian brethren, **“Test all things; hold fast what is good”** (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Luke recorded of certain Bereans, *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11). Certain Jews looked into the Scriptures and thought they were saved, yet Jesus confronted their erroneous thinking (cf. John 5:39,40). Paul addressed the zeal of his own nation and yet prayed that they might be saved, knowing that they were lost in their ignorance (cf. Romans 10:1-3). The Ethiopian eunuch knew that a proper knowledge of the Scriptures was vital to his spiritual well-being (cf. Acts 8:26-39).

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**Acceptable Response Applied.** A person may contact the Gospel, reason acceptably, and still be lost. The reason is that the full obedience to the Gospel is lacking. Felix and his wife heard the faith in Christ and did not respond correctly (cf. Acts 24:24-25). Obedience is absolutely required to be saved. It is written, *“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:9). Some have believed that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord, and the Savior, yet also believed that they were saved at that point before being baptized into Christ (cf. Galatians 3:26,27). Man is not freed from his sins until he obeys from the heart what God says is necessary to contact the blood of Christ (cf. Romans 6:3-18). One is not saved who disobeys or obeys a “gospel” that is not the Gospel. It is only when having obeyed what God said, as God said it, for the reason God said it, that one is saved. †

**Jimmy Clark preaches for the Bethel Church of Christ in Athens, Alabama, USA.**

*“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing  
by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17)

*“I tell you, no; but unless you repent you  
will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3,5)

*“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and  
believe in your heart that God has raised Him  
from the dead, you will be saved. For with  
the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the  
mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:9-10)

*“Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of  
you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission  
of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”  
(Acts 2:38,39)*

*“...Be faithful until death, and I will give  
you the crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10)

# What Was the Restoration Movement?

Jane McWhorter

The desire for religious freedom was a major factor in the emigration of Europeans to the American colonies. The preeminent religious group in the new land, the Church of England, offered little tolerance for those of differing beliefs, however. Dissent originated in England. John Wesley, a presbyter of the Church of England, was instrumental in the formation of a dissenting group known as the Wesleyan Societies (1729). Members of these societies traveled to the colonies. The term Methodist Episcopal Church was accepted for the Wesleyan Societies.

James O'Kelly (1735 – 1826), a Methodist from the region of Virginia and North Carolina, opposed the authoritarian form of government in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Severing relations with this group, O'Kelly and his followers took the name of Republican Methodists. Although O'Kelly never discerned the complete New Testament pattern, he and his followers were searching for the ancient order. Taking the Bible as their creed, O'Kelly and his followers became known only as Christians, dropping the name Republican Methodist, a burgeoning movement to overthrow the human element in religion and rely only upon the Scriptures.

The idea of restoring New Testament Christianity was also developing in the region of Vermont and New Hampshire. Elias Smith (born in 1769) was sprinkled as a Congregationalist when he was an infant. As he studied, he wanted to be immersed. Although later immersed by a Baptist, Smith did not believe in Calvinism. He preached that the name Christian (Acts 11:26) was the only scriptural name to wear. He felt that the catechism was the “invention of men”. In New Hampshire, his followers (less than twenty) grouped together and considered themselves a Church of Christ, only Christians. In about 1800, these people had a conference to draw up articles of their belief, but they decided that the New Testament was an all-sufficient rule. Smith's beliefs were essentially the same as those of O'Kelly: Christ as the head, no creeds but the New Testament, no name but Christians.

Another New Englander, Abner Jones (born in 1772), was also instrumental in restoring New Testament Christianity. In 1793, Jones was baptized into the Baptist Church. At first he practiced medicine, but later he became a Baptist preacher. He was responsible for the first Free Church. This group rejected human creeds and

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wore only the name Christians. Working primarily in New Hampshire, Jones was looking for the New Testament order of things; but he did not go far enough.

We see the beginning of a new idea in religious thinking. Realizing the futility of ever reforming a corrupt, apostate church, men from different sections of this new nation started saying, “Let’s not try to reform. Let’s simply take the Word of God and restore the original church of the New Testament”. Seed, when properly preserved, can produce the same original plant when it is placed in the soil hundreds of years later. So can the divine seed, the Word of God (Luke 8:11). Without realizing what others were teaching in different sections of the country, honest men began reaching the same conclusions when they rejected human opinions and relied solely upon the Word of God. †

**Jane McWhorter is a writer and lives in Fayette, Alabama, USA.**

### **The Church and Our Destiny**

**Tim Childs**

In our study of the church, we consider what God planned even before the dawn of time as we know it. Our minds are led by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures to reflect upon what the matchless power of God has accomplished in years gone by, and we learn further what God is continuing to do in our lifetime and even up to the day Jesus returns with his mighty angels to draw the curtain of time.

There is so much confusion prevailing in our day concerning the concept of the church because so many have drifted away from the original purpose and plan God had and has in mind for the church. My friend, we must avoid being bogged down by denominationalism or any other ism that leads us away from the simplicity of the Gospel and the church produced and sustained by divine power. God has called believers to be nothing more than Christians, to wear no other name than the name of the Holy One who redeemed us by his blood. When men become “hyphenated Christians”, that is, describing ourselves as being “Christian-\_\_\_\_\_ist”, we are following a plan that is foreign to the Holy Scriptures, and especially the New Testament of Jesus Christ that leads exclusively to eternal life. On this side of eternity, men, women, and young people will always be plagued by false religion. It is one of Satan’s favorite tools by which he deceives folks into thinking their salvation has been secured. The Spirit of truth and the spirit of error are leading men in opposite directions. Our destiny of glory or doom hinges upon our choices – whether to follow the crowd, or whether to follow the Christ. Which choice are you making? “...*The churches of Christ greet you*” (Romans 16:16). †

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# Is It Too Late?

**Bob Plunket**

All of a sudden, denominational churches are desperate to unite against the evils of our day, and rightly so. It seems now more than ever before that we are beginning to see the folly of division and the strength of unity. Satan must have celebrated when he saw the church dividing into different denominations, and he must tremble at the hope of uniting. A move was on years ago to fight alcohol that was dry in our counties. Now there is a call to stand against the sale on Sunday. Then sometime ago there was a call to stand against the lottery.

Could it be possible that denominationalism is part of the blame. I remember well when men stood to pray and thanked God for the church of their choice. One prominent denominational person said, "The price we have paid for the church of our choice is a lost world." Now we are beginning to see what Jesus meant when He said, "*Father, that they all may be one as thou art in me and I in thee.*" We ask, "Why Lord?" "*So the world may believe that thou didst send me*" (John 17:21). The implication is clear, division causes confusion and atheism. It divides communities and families. It has cost us time, money, and souls to compete with each other.

The churches blew this opportu-

nity to go out with a united front and a united message when they decided each to have a church of their choice. They gave themselves different denominational names and creeds so they would not be confused as being like the church across the street. They are not yet ready to give up their names and creeds, but they do see the necessity of unity.

Someone will say, "Yeah, you just want it your way." No, God's way. Jesus built the church. It existed in the first century. It had a divinely appointed name, message, worship, organization, and mission. Everyone admits this. Even in this church, division was already breaking out, and Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing and that there be no division among you.*" He went on to define what division is. It is the wearing of human names, even of Paul or Peter (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Is it then too late? It is if we think we can fool the world into thinking we are united — Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc. Of course, we stand with anyone who stands against evil, and we will do what we can as a church to oppose it. Is it unreasonable to think we could give up denominational names and creeds and all be just Christians and members of the body of Christ? †

**Bob Plunket preaches for the Colbert Heights congregation in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA.**

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# Power Outage?

Dan Wheeler

Ever have the power go out during a church service? When it happened to us during Bible study, we made a few adjustments and held the worship service without lights, a sound system, or climate control. The experience made us all appreciate the benefits of electricity! It's one thing for the church *building* to experience a power outage; it's quite another for the church itself to be without *spiritual* power. A congregation that neglects prayer soon becomes apathetic or contentious, ineffective in carrying out the Great Commission. To avoid this, let us consider some thoughts on prayer:

- Make time for more prayer.** Yes, our calendars are already full. But if we make time to communicate with God, He will make time for us. More group efforts are needed (Matthew 18:20). There is a great benefit in the men and the women of the congregation each meeting separately and regularly for prayer.
- Pray from the heart.** Jesus warned us against vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7). Besides, it is touching to the whole church to hear a brother lead a sincere and heartfelt prayer that is scriptural and relevant to current needs.
- Intercede for others.** How encouraging and humbling it is to be prayed for by others. Calling out the names of the leaders, the missionaries, the sick, and others who have special needs is the heart of intercessory prayer.
- Ask for the right things.** Although there is no limit to the number of requests we may make to the Lord, we are to ask in faith (James 1:6) and according to His will (1 John 5:14).
- Get right at home.** Family turmoil is one of Satan's most effective wedges. Improve your relationship with your spouse so *"that your prayers be not hindered"* (1 Peter 3:7).

If we want to do the Lord's work, we need the Lord's help. That's why a congregation that has an appreciation for prayer will see its power. †

Dan Wheeler is the preacher for the Concord Street Church of Christ in Orlando, Florida, USA.



T. Pierce Brown

# *Singing and Making Melody*

Paul says in Ephesians 5:19, “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*”. It is probable that some person might assume that “*speaking to yourselves*” would mean “speak in such a fashion that no one could hear you”. If one has any other versions, it would be easy enough to check and see that they translate it “*speaking to one another*”. In this article, we do not intend to dwell on the difference in “*psalms,*” “*hymns,*” and “*spiritual songs*”, although there is a slight difference. We only mean to comment on the significance of the phrase “*singing and making melody in your hearts*”. The word “*singing*” is from the Greek term “*ado*” and is always used of vocal praise to God. It is used five times in the New Testament.

The term “*making melody*” is from the Greek word “*psallo*”, which means in the New Testament, “to sing a hymn”. The specific instruction here is that it is to be done in the heart. The singing is to be vocal music; the making melody (singing of a hymn of praise) is to be done in (from) the heart. In other words, it is not fitting and proper to merely sing a song. It is to be done from the inmost part of your life — the seat of your emotions and center of your being. Those who think their worship is superior to that of those who use instruments of music may be sadly mistaken. Going through the motions of singing without doing it in the proper spirit and with the understanding is vain worship just as much as playing on a mechanical instrument. †

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) lived and preached in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

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# TAKING CARE OF THE LORD'S MONEY

Royce Frederick

Paul was an apostle of Christ. If anyone could be trusted, surely Paul would be at the top of the list.

But Paul knew that even an apostle could be tempted to sin. After all, Judas had already fallen into the sin of greed; “...*he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it*” (John 12:4-6; see Matthew 26:14-16).

Paul took great care to guard against all kinds of sin, including greed: “*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (1 Corinthians 9:27). Paul was especially careful about how he handled the Lord’s money. On two occasions, he participated in the delivery of large amounts of money for the Lord’s work, and on both occasions, other people worked with him.

The first of these occurred in Acts 11. “*And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem (in Judea) to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Paul)*” (Acts 11:27-30). So, two men delivered the gift to a group of men, “the elders”. These were apparently the elders of the church in Jerusalem (see Acts 15:2; 21:17,18).

Later, when Paul was collecting money for poor Christians in Jerusalem, he informed the givers that other people would be helping him handle the money: “*And [to you at Corinth] we have sent with him [with Titus] the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind, avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us; providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight*

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*of men*” (2 Corinthians 8:18-21).

The contributions of the church belong to the Lord, not to a preacher or the leaders of the church. The Lord’s money should be cared for in a way which is “*honorable...not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*” (8:21). If we handle the money honestly, the Lord will see it, because He sees everything. But we need to make extra effort to be sure that our honest handling of the money is also visible to men, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Here are some suggestions regarding how to properly care for the contribution of the local church:

1. Select several trustworthy Christians, who will then work together counting the money immediately after each Sunday assembly. Various persons could serve in this work on a rotating basis.
2. Keep careful records of how much is given.
3. Deposit the money in a bank account, with the names of two or more men on the account.
4. Carefully consider suggestions from all of the members regarding how the contributions should be used. This helps the members give freely from their hearts.
5. Keep careful records of how the funds have been used.
6. Inform the members about how the funds have been used, and freely permit any of the members to examine financial records at any time.

We need to take great care about how we handle the Lord’s money. If we misuse funds entrusted to us, we bring shame and harm on ourselves, our family, and the Lord’s church.

Paul warned the young preacher, Timothy — and us, “*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness*” (1 Timothy 6:9-11).

“*A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold*” (Proverbs 22:1). †

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

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# The Lord's Supper

Ardron Hinton

*“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).*

### Getting the Message

- I. We are to follow the original instructions, and, like Paul, we should be careful to pass on what we received, avoiding changes and additions.
- II. This observance is not optional. The command is pointed: “DO THIS.” Good reasons are given for faithfully obeying the command.
- III. The observance as Christ gave it is very simple and requires no special physical arrangements, no elaborate ritual, or priestly administrator.
- IV. The emphasis of the observance is spiritual rather than physical, with most of the activity taking place in the heart and mind of the person.
- V. It is to be kept with frequency on a continuing basis because it fulfills ongoing spiritual needs and divine purposes, not as a ritualistic duty.
- VI. Neglect of it is spiritually dangerous, and so is the careless, casual, thoughtless observance of it without the purposes in mind.

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VII. The purposes to be kept in mind are plainly given:

- A. It is to keep the sacrificial death of Christ imprinted in the memory.
- B. It is to affirm our faith in the Savior to the skeptical world around us.
- C. It is a strand of faith connecting His death with His promised return.
- D. It is to remind us of His grace in saving such undeserving sinners.
- E. It is a uniting of Christ's people in a time of reflection on His love. †

**Ardron Hinton is a preacher of the Gospel living in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.**

## Presiding at the Lord's Table

**Louis Rushmore**

**I have gone thru most of your articles on communion and have not found one dealing with those who preside over the table. Just what should be said and should it be a mini sermon. It seems to me that this detracts from the great memorial that Jesus commanded us to observe especially if the song leader has selected a song that puts us in remembrance of what we are about to partake of. — a sister in Christ**

Other than Jesus' personal references to how the bread and fruit of the vine represented his sacrificial body and blood, we have absolutely nothing in either the institution or the re-institution of the Lord's Supper or Communion that specifies what is to be said on that occasion beyond that thanks (prayer) was given (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 23-25). The apostle Paul gives some additional information respecting the Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:26-28), but nothing appears in Scripture as to what is to be said or how long or short the saying of it might be.

In a similar vein, the New Testament records nothing about prefatory remarks or even a prayer respecting the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). However, when is it a wrong time to pray in the midst of Christians? When is it wrong to speak a biblical lesson?

Consequently, though not specifically stated, typically brethren with whom I am familiar may say a few remarks before the collection and will usually offer a prayer. Likewise, the remarks that may precede observance of the Lord's Supper are discretionary as well, probably well advised to ensure that all present realize what is about to take place.

However, the amount of time spent making prefatory remarks before observing the Lord's Supper is a matter of local, congregational preference. It is not a matter of doctrine, but a matter of allowable local custom or tradition (does not conflict with divine instruction). Those customs or traditions can be changed according to the wishes of the leadership (elders) of a local congregation, or several members might urge the elders to make an adjustment in this area if such an adjustment accommodates the majority of the congregation. †

# To Go or Not to Go: That Is the Question

Jerry A. Jenkins

Many have grown up in homes where the question to attend a service of worship was never brought up. Everyone knew that when the doors of the old meeting house were open, the entire family would be there. Why do these people attend the services?

1. They are there for they believe that Jesus is there! Jesus once stated: *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). Jesus is always with every Christian (Matthew 28:18-20), yet He is with us in a very special way when we make the effort and attend. How would anyone want to be close to the Lord and yet not want to be with Him?

2. They attend worship to demonstrate their love and gratitude to God for all He has done for them. His constant care and protection, His guidance through the dark times, and His sacrifice for us should cause there to swell in our hearts a gratitude that can be expressed by honoring Him in our worship. A genuine lover of God will never ask if he has to attend every service, but he will seek every opportunity to express that love.

3. Christians need the strength of fellow believers. If there has not yet come a time in your life when you felt this need, just wait, it is on its way. The Hebrews writer urges believers to consider how to provoke each other to *“love and good works”* (Hebrews 10:24). Dedicated Christians, by their words and actions, encourage and strengthen those who are weak. A failure to assemble will deeply hurt a weak Christian, rather than help. The smiles and encouragements are a must to those who are hurting.

4. Faithful, caring Christians assemble with others of like precious faith because it sets the right example. Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). One who puts his faith into action by assembling with the saints is more highly respected than one who is a stumbling block in his

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brother's path to God. Our influence is either for or against Christ!

5. When one worships on Sunday, it prepares his heart to serve the rest of the week. Arthur H. DeKruyter said, "Where is the church at 10:25 on Monday morning?" The church is at the dentist's office, in the auto sales room, the repair shop, in the truck, in the hospital, in the classroom, in the home, in offices, and hundreds of other places. That is where the church is, wherever God's people are. They are doing what they ought to be doing. They are honoring God, not just while they worship in a building, but out there in their daily walk. †

**Jerry A. Jenkins (1936-2010) was the preacher for many years for the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.**

# When I Was Absent from Worship

**J.A. McNutt**

1. It made some people question the reality of my religious faith (James 2:17).
2. It set an example of neglecting the assembly and failing to obey an inspired command (Hebrews 10:25).
3. I failed to observe the example set by the early church in partaking of the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7).
4. It made it impossible for the elders of the church to see that the entire flock was fed or taught the Word of God (Acts 20:28).
5. It indicated that I was not concerned about assembling with my brethren and the Lord's promise to be in our midst (Matthew 18:20).
6. Some must have concluded that I found more pleasure in fellowship with the world than with the Lord and my brethren (2 Corinthians 6:14).
7. I set the wrong example before my children and before others who were influenced by my absence (1 Timothy 4:12).
8. If I chose to be absent on a pleasure trip and made no plans to worship God, it would prove that I love the Lord too little and the world too much (2 Timothy 4:10).
9. It set a pattern of irregular church attendance, violating the steadfastness in teaching, fellowship and worship which was practiced by the apostolic church (Acts 2:42-47).
10. On the day that I willfully chose to be absent, I failed to walk in the light and did not enjoy the fellowship of my brethren (1 John 1:7). †

# “Here I Stand”

Harvey Porter

Martin Luther was charged with heresy and was summoned to appear before the Diet of Worms in April, 1821. As he concluded his defense, he said these words, “If the emperor desires a plain answer, I will give it to him. It is impossible for me to recant unless I am proved to be wrong by the testimony of Scripture. My conscience is bound to the Word of God. It is neither safe nor honest to act against one’s conscience. Here I stand. God help me, I cannot do otherwise.”

Those words, “Here I stand”, sparked the flames of the Protestant Reformation. People had to take a stand either with Scripture or against it.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold fast unless you have believed in vain*” (1 Corinthians 15:1,2).

The Gospel that he preached to them and which they had received required that they “stand” in it. This is simply another way of saying, “This I believe in with all my heart.”

We are in an age where most people do not have very many strong convictions about religious teachings. We have abhorred prejudice and bigotry to such an extent that we are afraid to hold strong convictions about anything.

But everyone must realize that there are guidelines in our lives that must be observed for us to have self-respect and a sense of honor. There is a deep-seated satisfaction of knowing that we believe in some things so strongly that we would die for them and by them.

This is the essence of Christianity. Our faith in our Lord Jesus must be so strong, that not only do we know what He stands for and teaches, but we stand for the same. We believe in His principles. We stand for them. These are things that we will not compromise nor negotiate.

It would be well for each of us as followers of the Christ to sit down and simply record the things that we truly “stand for”, and fix them clearly in our minds. We will find that life will become easier, not harder. We will live with resolve and conviction, not doubt and hesitation.

**“Here I stand!”**

†

**Harvey Porter (1929-1998) preached for many years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.**

## DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

# Wrong Is Always Wrong!

### Selected

In a period of loose, sagging morals, Satan provides many rationalizations for improper behavior. Those who would live faithful Christian lives must not be “*ignorant of his devices*” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Wrong doing is always wrong, despite our efforts to excuse our actions.

**WRONG IS WRONG EVEN IF YOU DON'T GET CAUGHT!** Let us remember that “*the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good*” (Proverbs 14:3).

**WRONG IS WRONG EVEN IF YOU DO IT FOR A GOOD CAUSE!** The honorable purpose does not justify a dishonorable deed or action. The end never does justify the means. “*All sin is transgression of the law*” (1 John 3:4; 5:17; 2 John 9).

**WRONG IS WRONG EVEN IF OTHERS ARE DOING WORSE THINGS!** It will be of little comfort to you in the Day of Judgment, if you should be lost, that others you knew did things which you considered to be worse than your own sins.

**WRONG IS WRONG EVEN IF IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOUR CONSCIENCE!** Even evil done in sincerity is sinful in the sight of the Holy God. “*...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7).

**WRONG IS WRONG EVEN IF IT IS COMMONLY CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE!** The Bible says, “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*” (Exodus 23:2). The Christian should “*enter not into the path of the wicked and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away*” (Proverbs 4:14,15). “*Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22). †

**REMEMBER, THERE IS NEVER  
A RIGHT WAY TO DO A WRONG THING!**



# 5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

## CORDS OR STRINGS

Paula Bates

1. Then she (Rahab) let them down by a \_\_\_\_\_ through the \_\_\_\_\_: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the city \_\_\_\_\_. Joshua 2:15
2. Can you draw out leviathan with a \_\_\_\_\_? Or his tongue with a \_\_\_\_\_ which you let down? Job 41:1
3. Let us break their \_\_\_\_\_ asunder, and \_\_\_\_\_ their cords from us. Psalms 2:3
4. The Lord is righteous: he has cut asunder the cords of the \_\_\_\_\_. Psalms 129:4
5. And if one prevail against him, \_\_\_\_\_ shall withstand him; and a \_\_\_\_\_ cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12
6. And when he had made a \_\_\_\_\_ of small \_\_\_\_\_, He (Jesus) drove them all out of the \_\_\_\_\_, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changer' money, and \_\_\_\_\_ the tables. John 2:15



- Answers:
1. Cord, window, wall
  2. Hook, cord
  3. Bands, cast away
  4. Wicked
  5. Two, three-fold
  6. Scourge, cords, temple, overthrew

Olden Cook

# Get Serious About Fishing



The boy was fishing on a stream when a group of young men arrived on the scene. With their sophisticated and fancy town-bought flies and lures, they commenced casting as they thrashed the water and joked and laughed. Repeatedly they cast their bait and reeled it in with nothing caught. Zilch! The boy sat slightly upstream with his tree-branch pole, a rough line, a homemade float, and a single hook, baited with hand-caught grasshoppers. Ever so often he pulled up a fish and strung it on his simple cord stringer. Finally, one of the young “sophisticates” asked him, “How do you do it? We’ve got all this special equipment, but we’re not catching a thing!” The boy looked up long enough to reply, “You’re fishing for fun. I’m fishing for fish!”

At least four of Christ’s disciples were fishermen. They knew that it took their full attention and energy to catch fish. Therefore, when Christ commanded them to leave their nets and “catch men”, they realized it would demand their all. That’s how we should view our work as **“ministers for Christ”**. Serving Him must be serious business. It requires prayer, courage, sacrifice, perseverance, and single-minded purpose. We must not be frivolous or lackadaisical about it. Our ministry for Christ should consume us. And do you know what will happen? You will enjoy your successes in **“fishing for the Master”**. Joy and peace within come as a result of fruit-bearing. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...”* (Galatians 5:22). †

**Olden Cook preached the Gospel several years in Kerrville, Texas, USA.**

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

# *Patience in Winning Souls*

**Dale Grissom**

Let us consider the importance that having patience plays in personal evangelism. Over the years, I have studied many helps and aids that are designed to help teach the Gospel to lost souls. Some of these aids are designed to try to convert the individual on the first lesson, others the second or third lesson, and others are designed so that at least four or more lessons are needed.

One thing I have learned through years of doing personal evangelism is that there is no substitute for having patience. As personal evangelism teachers, we must realize that every person is different. We cannot change the Gospel of Christ, but we must continue to teach the students until they have meditated upon the Word, understand the message, and have counted the cost of being a Christian.

Many times, personal evangelism teachers become so eager to baptize the student that they don't allow time for the student to absorb the message and then base their response on knowledge. This may be one of many reasons that new Christians fall away within the first five years after they are baptized. Another thing that contributes to many converts falling away is that sometimes the congregation does not respond to the needs of the new Christian. We may not give the support and friendship that is needed so much to make new converts feel that they are part of a very special family.

In personal evangelism we must demonstrate patience by not giving up on the prospect. We must be determined to continue to show patience by persevering in teaching the Word of God to the student. Souls are so very precious! We must completely give ourselves to the most wonderful work on earth — winning lost souls! †

**Dale Grissom is a longtime teacher of lost souls and is a part of the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.**

*“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 NKJV*

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

# Ashley Came to Church

**Keith Parker**

Have you noticed my haircut? Got it at Great Clips. I got a great haircut at Great Clips, and let me tell you why.

The lady that cut my hair is named Ashley. As far as I know, this was my first time to meet her. When you go to Great Clips, you usually just take whoever is available. When I sat down in her chair, we started our conversation. Small talk at first. Then a little bit more personal and important.

As you can imagine, I brought up the subject of religion. I told Ashley that I was the preacher of the Hendersonville church of Christ and invited her to worship. She seemed excited about my invitation and told me that she would come. After the haircut, I asked Ashley what had been her biggest tip since she started cutting hair. She thought about it and said, “Oh, about \$10.00.” Well, I reached into my billfold and pulled out an eleven dollar tip (kind of surprised myself). I gave it to Ashley and said, “I bet you think that I’m bribing you to come to church.” She said, “If I come to church, it will be because I want to and not because of the tip.”

Guess what. The next Sunday Ashley came. She was with us in worship. But not only was she here, she had family members with her. In fact, she and her family had lunch with us after church.

Let me tell you what impressed me. Here’s a lady that said she would come, and she showed up. She made a commitment, and she followed through. She stuck by her word. Her word was her bond. The wise man said, “*It is better not to vow that to make a vow and not fulfill it*” (Ecclesiastes 5:5). Way to go, Ashley. You did what you said you would do.

Who can you invite to church? A family member? A friend at work? A school buddy? Your hairdresser? The person at Walmart who checks you out? Your mechanic? The guy at the post office? Your banker? Sometimes that’s all it takes. A neighbor saying to a neighbor, a friend saying to a friend, “Hey, why don’t you come and worship with us!”

The haircut cost me \$10.00. The tip was \$11.00. \$21.00 in all. What’s a soul worth to you? †

**Keith Parker works with the Lord’s church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.**



# That's Unloving...

Justin Hopkins

Often you will hear someone speak about how unkind and unloving it is to judge someone else by saying that they are caught up in sin. After all, who are we to be judging? Don't we have sin in our own lives? How, then, can we judge someone else for what he is doing? Didn't Jesus say, "*Judge not...*" (Matthew 7:1)?

This is an assumption about what is unkind and what it unloving. To accuse someone of being unloving is a heavy accusation, because "*He that loveth not knoweth not God*" (1 John 4:8). To say that someone is unloving, then, is to say that he is not in fellowship with God. This makes the discussion about what is and isn't loving one of utmost importance.

How, then, do we define love? John goes on to tell us that "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8). God, by His very nature, *is* love. In the preceding verse, John told us that "*Love is of God.*" To truly understand love, then, we must turn to God and to His Word for a definition. Since love emanates from the very essence of His being, any definition of love that contradicts His definition cannot be correct. We must ask, then: What does the Bible say about being loving toward those around us?

*"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. **And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.** This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it"* (2 John 5,6). Here John tells us that, not only is love *defined* by the person of God, but it is *commanded* by Him. So, to be unloving is to be out of fellowship with God, and

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

to be disobedient to His commands. Surely, nobody can expect to reach Heaven if he is acting in a way toward those around him that is unloving.

Jesus takes this one step further and tells us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). So, then, to be disobedient to God's commands also demonstrates a lack of love for our Savior!

John goes even further, explaining to us what this command entails. After all, there are so many different definitions of love, how can we know what truly is loving if God did not tell us? Thankfully, He did! He says that love is to live by His commandments. Therefore, if I am to be loving to my neighbors, I must always ensure that my actions toward them are directed by God's commands. Conversely, if my actions toward my neighbors are in direct violation of God's commands, or even fail to fulfill them, then I am not truly being loving toward them.

What, then, does the Bible say in regard to addressing sin and error in the lives of others? It must either be loving or unloving; there can be no middle ground. Galatians 6:1,2 commands us: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" So, if I am to be loving, I have an obligation to reach out with an attitude of love and compassion to those who I see trapped in sin, and to try to bring them back into a right relationship with Christ. To fail to do so is to fail to fulfill the Law of Christ, and is therefore, unloving.

Paul struck at the heart of the matter when he dealt with the concept of withdrawing fellowship from a brother who is in sin. Here is an action that is seen by most in the world, and perhaps even in the church, as being unkind and unloving. But, what does the Law of Christ say about it? In 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul declared firmly that one of the purposes of withdrawing fellowship is to save the soul of the brother or sister who is caught up in sin.

In the same vein, Paul tells us again in 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15, "*But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*" The withdrawal of fellowship is, of course, a last resort, but one with definite purpose. It is to help bring some immediacy to the consequences of sin and to cause the erring ones to count the cost, with hopes that they will return to the paths of righteousness. It is not something that is to be done in a mean-spirited way, but with love and sorrow, offering encouragement to repent, and the promise of a warm reception at every turn upon doing so.

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

When you stop and think about it, how could it be loving to ignore sin? Sure, the personal relationship, and the benefits that you receive from that relationship remain intact. But what of the *sinner*? He or she is hurtling toward eternity, lost and without hope, and those around them fail to show enough concern to do what they can to stop them before it is everlastingly too late! If this person was sitting within his house, enjoying some entertaining diversion, but the house was on fire, would you not remove him from that house, no matter what was required? To leave him alone to burn certainly could not be loving. How could it be any different to leave one alone to face the fires of hell, while you, holding the Gospel, have done nothing to save his eternal soul?

Is it uncomfortable to confront sin? Does it sometimes cause rifts in relationships? Does it sometimes evoke anger, shame, sorrow, and other such emotions? Absolutely. But, is it not the ultimate act of love to set aside those temporal things that mean so much, and to strive to save a soul? So, the next time you are faced with a soul that is lost in sin, do what is loving, reach out to him with the Law of Christ, and help him, while there is still time! †

Justin Hopkins, working with the World Evangelism team in the development of Bible class materials for the church, lives with his wife, Leah, in Austin, Texas, USA.

### Do What You Can

We cannot all be heroes, and thrill a hemisphere  
With some great daring venture, some deed that mocks at fear;  
But we can fill a lifetime with kindly acts and true —  
There's always noble service for noble hearts to do.  
We cannot all be preachers, and sway with voice and pen,  
As strong winds sway the forest, the minds and hearts of men;  
But we can be evangelists to souls within our reach:  
There's always Love's own Gospel for loving hearts to preach.  
We cannot all be martyrs, and win a deathless name  
By some divine assignment, some ministry of flame;  
But we can live for Truth's sake, can do for Christ and dare —  
There's always a cross of duty for faithful hearts to bear.

— Author Unknown

# The Bread of Life

Mike Ireland

Jesus joined His disciples in the boat and journeyed with them to the other side of the lake. When the crowd realized that He was gone, they, too, journeyed to the other side. When they found Him, they asked, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Why did no one ask Him, “How did you get here?”

“Your full stomachs have motivated you to seek me but you are working for the wrong food,” Jesus told them. They made no effort to deny it.

Many of those who followed the Lord were probably hoping for a political savior. They may have envisioned not only deliverance from the Romans but a new prosperity, with Jesus as their leader. His reluctance to be their king may have surprised them, but it did not discourage them. Perhaps, he had some conditions they had to meet before he would agree to lead them. So, they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

They were confused about what is truly important in life. It is an easy mistake to make. We see it all the time: people investing huge amounts of time, energy, and emotion in the wrong things. Convinced they know what’s good, they use themselves up in the quest for something that cannot satisfy.

Now, don’t miss what Jesus says: The “real food” is not had by work but comes as a gift.

Yet, it is hard to convince ourselves that hard work won’t win the day. We just believe that if we will work hard enough, do our best, then the goal will be ours. Jesus says, what you want and need is a gift God gives. In fact, it is not a work that originates with man at all. It is the work of God, the work of grace, food that cannot be earned, only received.

Did you ever notice that the things which come from our hard work always lose their value ... corrode ... decay ... cease to satisfy. But whatever God gives only grows in value to the soul. The Bible tells us over and over, in hundreds of ways, that God’s gifts are forever, but the things of the world pass away.

People have a deep hunger, a hunger for meaning and purpose, for joy and peace. It is a hunger that is far deeper than simply wanting a full belly and a comfortable home. Jesus knew that.

When we understand that there is more to life than bread, then we are open to the gift of God, the Living Bread — Jesus. †

**Mike W. Ireland teaches at Harding University and is minister for the Westside church of Christ in Searcy, Arkansas, USA.**

# Think Souls

Leah Hopkins

Imagine standing in the middle of a crowded office. There are dozens of cubicles and the hum of people on the phone and typing away at their computers fill the air. A young man about nineteen or twenty years old bumps into you as he makes his way to the copier. With a twinge of panic in his eyes, he mumbles an apology and continues his canter to the line at the machine. “How rude!” you think, “Why, that wasn’t even a real apology. I should report him to his boss”.

Then, there is Bible Class on Wednesday night. Following the last prayer, you start scanning the crowd for one of the deacons you needed to talk to after services. Your eyes rest on a young man who has a brain disability after a car accident a few years ago. He really is a nice guy, and you have always thought it was so great that he continues to come while some in his situation would turn inward. He notices you, too, but you break your gaze quickly because even though you admire him, he also has a habit of talking anyone’s ear off that will give him a two-second window, and you really don’t want to deal with that right now.

In life, every person experiences something similar to the above scenarios if he ventures out into public or receive visits. If we have a job, there is always going to be that one coworker who seems to hit a nerve. There are lines to stand in, people who “steal” our parking spots, and other moments that try our patience and situations that make us want to put some people in their place.

This is not something that is unique in our busy and morally loose society, but something that happened to the people we read about in our Bibles as well. Think about Paul in Acts 24. I encourage you to put yourself right beside him during this time. He is tired, probably dirty, has recently been made aware of a conspiracy to take his life, and was safely brought to Felix the governor, where he was told he could make his case when his accusers came (Acts 23:33-35). Well, five days later they arrived, and brought with them a skilled orator to help make their case. The Jews had a deep-seated malevolence against Rome and had no respect toward the men serving the government, whether they were tax collectors or leadership. However, in this case, they show up and begin giving honor to Felix.

Paul knew they were being fake, and to give Felix some credit, he probably did too, but how frustrating it must have been to actually be standing there as this unfolded right in front of you. On top of that, they attack Paul with false

## CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

accusations, who I am sure as with any of us who have ever been accused of something we have not done, was no doubt biting his tongue and picking his battles. By showing patience and then choosing his words carefully, Paul was able to respond in a way that was compelling enough to be granted a time later by Festus and his wife to hear the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 24:24,25).

Paul didn't do anything that we ourselves cannot do. It takes practice, but we have to get a new mind set. We have to ask ourselves what is more important, putting someone in his place or pointing him to God's grace? Look at the individual. Perhaps the young man who rammed into you is new and his boss has put the fear of unemployment in him so thick he stresses himself sick at night, because his new wife is pregnant, and they cannot begin to know how to pay the bills that keep adding up. She had an appointment that day which will be another \$300 they don't have, and he was thinking about this when he accidentally smacked into you, which snapped him back to the present just in time to realize there was a line at the copier and the meeting for which his boss needed the copies started in just five minutes.

Of course, it could be that he was just a young man who was never taught his manners and was simply being flat-out rude. Whatever the case may be, is he not a soul for whom Christ died? The people in this country promoting sin and telling us WE are being judgmental... Christ died for them, too. The person who won't remember who you are in five minutes because of his mental disabilities, but craves to be treated with the same humanity as any other person... Christ died for him, too. Would Jesus avoid them?

Are we looking at the world as Jesus did when He was on this earth? Matthew records that when he saw the multitudes "...*he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*" There are over seven billion people on this earth, and every single one of them means enough to our Heavenly Father that He sent His Son to die in his or her place. What right have we to call ourselves faithful Christians if we are not even trying to see the soul in front of us? Jesus' heart ached for the Israelites who refused to hear Him when He said: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" and when He asked God's forgiveness for the people taking His life (Luke 23:34).

Brethren, we need to look past the surface and look at the soul. If we do not, how do we expect God to look at us? †

**Leah Hopkins, wife of Justin Hopkins, works with the World Evangelism team in the development of Bible class materials.**



# To Everything There Is a Season

Bonnie Rushmore

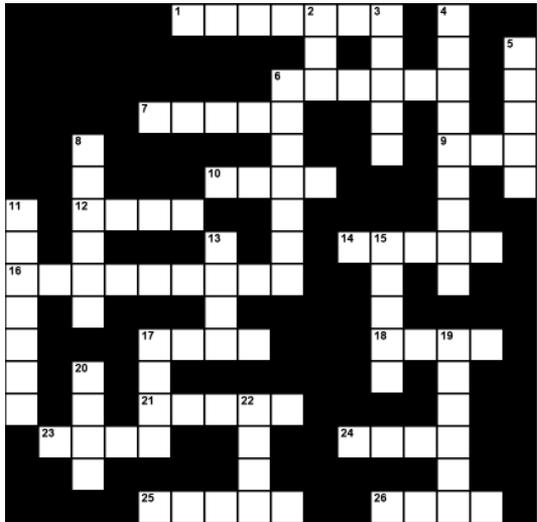
## Across

1. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_  
(two words).
6. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
9. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
10. There is a time to be \_\_\_\_\_.
12. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
14. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
16. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_  
(two words).
17. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
18. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_  
away stones.
21. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
23. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
24. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
25. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
26. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.

## Down

2. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Two words)

5. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
6. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_ from  
embracing.
8. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_ stones.
11. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
13. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
15. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
17. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
19. There is a time to be \_\_\_\_\_.
20. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
22. There is a time to \_\_\_\_\_.



# Crisis of Life: Youth

Tom Holland

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

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

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

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

Some young people will be judged as 15, 16, 17, 18 or 19-years-olds. These were the chronological ages they had reached when death snatched them into eternity.

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

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

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

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

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

# Seek First the Kingdom in Walking According to the Spirit

Jim Poland

Walking according to the Spirit can only be done *“in Christ”*. *“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”* (Romans 8:1,4). To be *“in Christ”* requires that we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3,4). This is the only way God has provided that we may put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Therefore, we can only walk after the Spirit by obeying what the Spirit has inspired to be written as they did on Pentecost, 33 A.D. (Acts 2:38). Baptism unto remission of sins removes those sins that separate us from God and His service (Isaiah 59:1,2).

Walking according to the Spirit is a condition that must be maintained. If we walk according to the works of the flesh, we *“will not inherit the kingdom of God...”* (Galatians 5:21). It is a condition that must be practiced to be free from condemnation and that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (Romans 8:1,4). The smallest deed is better than the grandest intention.

Our ability to “walk” does not earn commendation. The righteous requirement is *“fulfilled in us,”* not **by** us. Some think that God saved them and converted them just to hear them teach and condemn sin. That’s like the rooster who thinks the sun comes up just to hear him crow. Righteousness does not consist in being a little less bad than someone else. It comes as a gift through obedient faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 5:1,2; Ephesians 2:8,9).

Seeking the kingdom first requires a certain state of mind. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3). The Spirit must have priority in our thinking to “set” our minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). This is not what comes from just any meditation of mankind. That which comes from man’s spirit still minds the flesh. The state of mind that puts the kingdom first must come from the Word that the Spirit reveals (John 14:25; 16:13)! Priorities determine life or death spiritually. *“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6). The carnal mind is an enemy of God (Romans 8:7; James 4:4). The carnal mind cannot please God (Romans 8:7,8).

Seeking the kingdom first requires a certain manner of life. Galatians 5:16-

## DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

26 was written to the “*children of God*” (Galatians 3:26,27). The lust of the flesh and walking in the Spirit are opposed to one another (Galatians 5:16-18). We must stop practicing the works of the flesh, or we cannot inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). We must produce the “*fruit of the Spirit*” as we walk through life, or we have not truly set our lives to seek the kingdom first (Galatians 5:22-26). †

Jim Poland preaches for the church of Christ in Carthage, Missouri, USA.

### ***“Ponder Your Feet??”***

**John Smith**

Proverbs 4:26 says to us, “*Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established*”. God is warning us to take a look at what we are doing and where we are headed. Ephesians 5:15-16 states, “*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” It is God’s will that we always consider our spiritual condition and make correction where needed so that we can glorify Him. If correction is needed... let us make it and get busy in the Lord. We do not know what tomorrow holds for us! There is much work to be done in His kingdom and in the local work. What work you say?

- Attend all of the services of the church faithfully.
- Set aside some time each day for personal Bible study.
- Teaching the lost the plan of Salvation.
- Teach a Bible class.
- Leading songs in worship.
- Visit the sick and needy – there are many opportunities to assist those who are elderly and/or those who are in need.
- Greet and visit our visitors who come into our assembly. Some are hearing the Word of God and seeing Christians for the first time when they visit our worship services. Let us make them feel welcome.
- Support the work of the church – we need Christians who will shoulder the load and seek out what needs to be done and do it.

**If we are going to be useful to God, we are going to have to “Ponder” our paths that our feet are taking us and make corrections if needed. We must all be looking for opportunities for us to better serve our Lord as we ponder our feet!** †

# Mortality

Tim D. Shoemaker

Philip II, father of Alexander the Great and king of Macedon, was always accompanied by two men, each of whom had a very interesting duty. One man was to say to him each morning, “Philip, remember that you are but a man,” while the second was to ask the king each evening, “Philip, have you remembered that you are but a man?” Too often we forget our own mortality and that because many simply do not like to think about dying.

I don’t believe that people should have a morbid preoccupation with death, but it is a reality. Sometimes when people become very successful, especially if it is the realm of power, such as a king like Philip II, they begin to think of themselves as being above all others. Philip wanted to be reminded at the beginning and ending of every day that he was but a mortal like every other man.

It doesn’t matter how much we accomplish, how much wealth we obtain, how powerful we become, or how long we live — we are still mortal. We are no different from any other man in this respect. The oldest man to ever live was Methuselah, and yet the Bible history of this man says, “*And*

*Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech: And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: AND HE DIED*” (EMPHASIS T.S.) (Genesis 5:25-27).

We’re all mortals. Again and again, the Bible reminds us of this. The psalmist tells us, “*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away*” (Psalm 90:10). James, the Lord’s brother, reminded us of this when he wrote, “*For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (James 4:14).

It is because of the fact that our time is limited that we must be all the more careful of how we use that time. Two verses after his warning about our limited time, the psalmist added, “*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*” (Psalm 90:12). This was a prayer that God would teach us “to live as dying men should live, knowing the uncertainty of life and the inevitable accounting we must give to God for how we have used our days.” Jesus understood this as He explained to His disciples that, “*I must work the works*

## DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

*of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4). The apostle Paul, who labored day and night in proclaiming the Gospel, wrote to the church at Ephesus encouraging them to *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5:15,16). The New American Standard translates verse 16 as *“making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”*

There is so much to do in life. We are busy with our jobs, with raising a family, with helping the needy, the sick, and the shut-ins, but in all these good works, let us not forget our primary responsibility to God and the doing of His will. Maybe like Philip of old, we need someone to remind us each day that we are but men. †

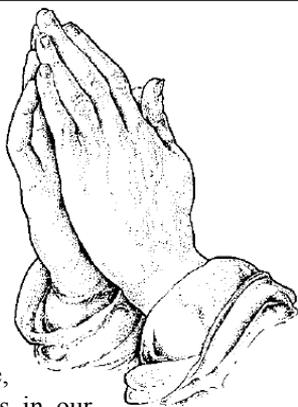
**Tim D. Shoemaker preaches for the Roebuck Parkway church in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.**

# *Have you prayed?*

**Chad Ezelle**

Our Lord made it very clear to the people who first followed Him: they were to ask God to meet their needs. Shouldn't we? Genuine, heartfelt prayer can produce powerful changes in our lives and world. When we lift up our hearts to God, asking for His wisdom, we open ourselves up to a great source of wisdom and love.

Do you have questions about today? Questions about your future that you can't answer? Questions about choices or decisions you'll soon have to make? Needs that you can't satisfy by yourself? Have you sought God's wisdom? Have you asked for direction? Protection? Strength? Courage? If you have, do you consistently ask for His wisdom? Our God is perfectly capable of answering your prayers, but first, you have to ask. Find some time today to read James 1:5. Think about it. Put it into practice. †



# SPECIAL PEOPLE

Wayne Barrier

Christians are referred to as “special people” in the writings of Peter and Paul. Consider these passages of Scripture:

Titus 2:11-14: *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age; Looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for himself His own special people, zealous of good works.*

1 Peter 2:9,10: *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people; that you may proclaim the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: Who once were not a people, but are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

What does it mean to be a “special person”? These passages refer to several things. They include being a people who are (1) redeemed from every lawless deed; (2) purified; (3) people of God; (4) a holy nation; (5) a royal priesthood; (6) a chosen generation; (7) called out of darkness into the marvelous light; and (8) recipients of God’s mercy. In summary, special people are very blessed, having been saved through the grace, mercy, love, and sacrifice of God. These truths are well documented in the other writings of Peter and Paul. It is wonderful to be part of a holy nation and royal priesthood with the many blessings associated with this status with God.

The passages also refer to some responsibilities associated with being a special person. These include (1) being zealous for good works, and (2) being people who praise Him who called you out of darkness. These two responses to being blessed as a child of God are very important. We should be “zealous” for good work. This implies eager and enthusiastic effort to do good, as defined in the Scriptures. We are more than simply compliant with God’s desire for us to do good work. We should be zealous. Secondly, we are a people who proclaim the praises of Him who saved us. This implies that we are eager to let it be known how we love, respect, trust, obey, and honor our God and Savior. Praise for God must be open and free as well as an overriding component of our being.

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What a blessing to be “special” in God’s eyes. We possess the greatest blessing a person can enjoy, if we are among these people. Thankfully, the invitation is given to all men to receive this blessing (Matthew 11:28-30, Acts 2:38). †

**Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA, and does mission work in several countries.**

### **You Have Compassed This Mountain Long Enough**

**Jeff Archey**

God declared divine instruction through Moses, “*Ye have compassed this mountain long enough...*” (Deuteronomy 2:3). In other words, Israel, you have gone around the base of this mountain for several days, it is time to move onward!

In another sense, there are “mountains” in life we compass or go around and around. We stay in the same old direction that we direct, but we need to listen to God and turn to a better direction, Friends! Why not resolve to do so? I challenge us to follow what God directs today. It is time we cease compassing the mountains!

**Wasting time** is a mountain we compass. “*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Ephesians 5:16). As Robertson puts it, “We all have the same time. Paul goes into the open market and buys it up by using it rightly.” There is the factor: It is imperative we use our time wisely and rightly. God forbid any of us be like Felix in Acts 24:24-25. He sent for Paul, but afterwards trembled at what he heard. There is no example from the Scriptures where Felix came to Christ. We go around and around not using time wisely. Schedule carefully and prioritize with importance.

**Apathy. Simply not caring.** Can you imagine? No emotion, no compassion, no concern for anything or anyone. In Revelation 3:14-16, the church allowed the things of the world to dictate their comfort, and the Lord commanded them to repent! Indeed, a mountain that takes us around and around with no direction and no concern. Oh, “turn northward,” Friend!

**Worry** is a never-ending compass. Around and around with emotions all torn. “*Be careful [or anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*” (Philippians 4:6). Turn it over to the Lord – the worry, the concern, and the strife. Always remember a rule of thumb concerning worry: If you cannot do anything about it, worry will not change it, and if you can do something about it, then work and do not worry!

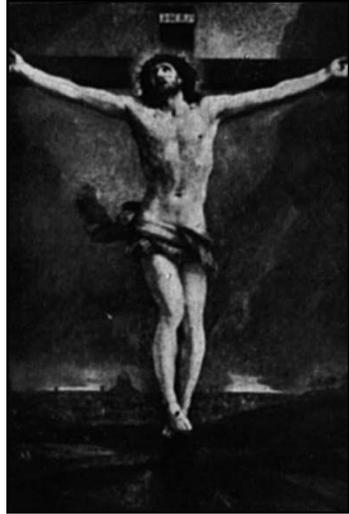
**Ignorance** is a mountain (Hosea 4:6). Ignorance is destructive. Those at Berea did not allow ignorance to permeate their lives (Acts 17:10,11). Ignorance and refusal to learn is as one that is “*ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Timothy 3:7). Let us grow in our knowledge and put it to use (2 Peter 3:18).

Wasting precious time, apathy, worry, and ignorance. Oh, there are so many throughout the world that compass these mountains and get nowhere. Praise to God that we have a direction to go! Dear Friend, do you have that right direction and plan? †

# The Mystery of the Ages

**Betty Burton Choate**

The mystery of Eternal Ages  
— Turning point in Time —  
Knew no heralding of trumpets,  
Was not recognized by Pilate,  
Sanhedrin nobles,  
Or false witnesses who lied.  
. . . . Bowed from sin  
And condemnation,  
Jesus cried aloud and died.



Who was present  
For the moment  
When Salvation's price was paid?  
Weeping, stood His Mother,  
John,  
A few women who believed,  
And the mob that mocked in unbelief,  
But not  
The men He'd gathered round Him  
As He taught and healed the land,  
Not His brothers or His sisters  
Had been made to understand.

Only later did they own Him,  
— Risen Lord,  
Transcendent God —  
— Holy Lamb of man's redemption,  
Judge in glory of us all —  
Only later did they fathom  
— Preach to earth's remotest isle —  
That the Babe laid in the manger  
— that the Man laid in the grave —  
Must be born in hearts of sinners  
— Dead *in* sin,  
Now dead *to* sin—  
And born again, *alive in Him*,  
Eternally.

# Troubled Homes

Hardeman Nichols

It was autumn in Paris in 1822, as a lonely American stood looking out his window. He was a young playwright and had traveled to London two years before. Though he had met with some success, one of his enterprises had failed, and he had gone to Paris. Alone and away from America for nine years, he was engulfed by a wave of sadness as he thought of home. Unable to throw off his melancholy, John Howard Payne sat down in his room, and he began to write the words that began to vent from his homesick soul.

A year later, his words were included in an opera that he had written, and Maria Tree received a standing ovation when she sang it. Payne's name was soon spread all over the world. Twenty-seven years later, in 1850, in Washington, D.C., Jenny Lind, the world famous "Swedish Nightingale", appeared in concert. Present were President Millard Fillmore, many of his cabinet members, and other dignitaries. Daniel Webster arose from his seat and bowed; then the great singer turned to the audience and focused her attention upon one man who was inconspicuously seated in the concert hall. He was the one who had written the words of *Home Sweet Home*. She never took her eyes off him as she sang. Tears streamed down Payne's face. In all that audience, it would have been difficult to have found one dry eye. The song she sang was what Payne had written in Paris:

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

"Home" is a magic word that often has thrilled the hearts of the weary, encouraged the eyes of the returning prodigal, and brought strength to the lonely traveler. It is a haven where joys and sorrows can be shared, and where hopes and resolutions are born.

Home is a different picture to many. It has lost that place of sanctity and has long since crumbled from its pedestal. Satan, with his relentless attacks upon the homes of the world, has caused such despair until some see no hope for the future. Although many homes are in real trouble, it is not because the institution as God planned it has failed. It is because homes have not applied the divine principles of design and purpose that God had originally given to them. Remember that the home was established by divine right.

Moses wrote, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God*

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

*created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:27,28).*

After Adam was created, God said, *“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him...And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:18-24).*

Jesus appealed to God’s original purposes as He corrected the errors which arose when men had turned away from His divine order for the home. He called men back from the troubles they had caused by ignoring His rules of conduct, and said, *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:9).*

The ideal home is the one that follows the entreaty of Joshua in the Old Testament. He said, *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).* Today we can have homes like that, if we do as Joshua taught, *“Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served.”* That means that we should turn away from anything that stands between us and the true God.

The Bible warns, *“He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind” (Proverbs 11:29).* Troublers of homes should repent. The prophet Oded said to King Asa of Judah: *“The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you, but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you...but when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them” (2 Chronicles 15:2-4).*

God’s plan for homes today is for both husband and wife to come to Christ and let Him guide them and their children into usefulness and peace. The home as God has designed it still works for the benefit of society, our nation, our community, the church, and everyone else. †

**Hardeman Nichols preaches for the Pleasant Grove Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, USA.**

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

# Married...In the Lord

Dan R. Owen

One certainly doesn't have to be married to be a faithful Christian, but for those who are married, our marriage is inseparable from our relationship with God. A person's marriage has everything to do with that person's Christianity. Here are some reasons why that is true.

**Being married is part of God's plan for society.** In the beginning, the Designer designed marriage so that all would be good. He designed it so that two people would be committed to one another in a life partnership, and in that partnership they might become one in sexual relationship. Being married is the basis of society as God conceived it, so it puts one in step with God's plan.

**Choosing a marriage partner involves one's relationship with God.** As far back as the time of Abraham when he said, "*you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites*", the Bible has urged God's people to choose mates that will enhance their relationship with God. Paul said, "*Be not yoked together with unbelievers...*" in much the same vein. When we make the choice of a mate, we are making a choice that directly affects our walk with God.

**God is involved in the formation of a marriage.** He functions as an authoritative witness to a sacred covenant formed between two eligible people. He notices and recognizes the marriage covenant as binding. He actually joins the couple together in his own mind as a married couple. God does not join people according to secular law, but according to His law. Since He does the joining, there are not two, but three parties involved in every legitimate marriage.

**The day to day activity in marriage affects one's relationship with God.** The way a husband treats his wife on a daily basis affects God's openness to his prayers. Christ seeks to rule the behavior of both parties in a marriage so they will mutually submit to one another's needs, respect one another, love one another, and be faithful to one another. Since marriage is the primary relationship of our lives, and since the practice of Christianity involves our conduct in relationships, our marriage greatly affects our relationship with God.

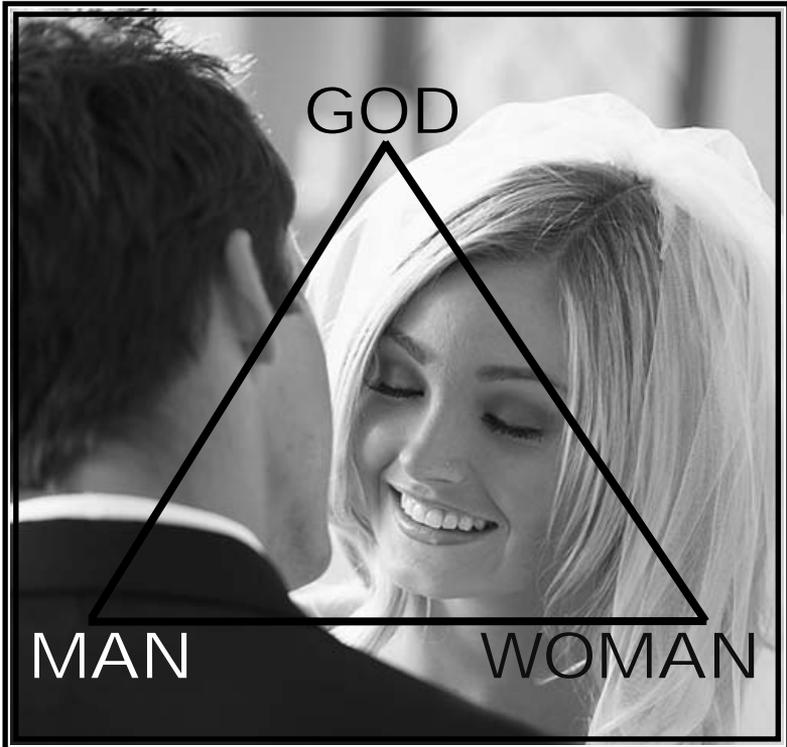
**Our respect for God's marriage laws directly affects our salvation.** God hates divorce. Jesus did not permit remarriage after divorce except in cases where a faithful partner's spouse committed adultery. In all other cases of divorce, Jesus said, "*and he that marries another commits adultery*". Many are living in violation of these divine laws. Sometimes they come, wanting to place membership

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

in the church or wanting to be baptized. Often they have no intention of discontinuing adulterous relationships or bringing their lives into harmony with God's marriage laws. In such cases, the church must choose between acquiescing to the wishes of people or upholding the laws of God. The church has a responsibility to uphold the integrity of God's marriage laws because our mission is the salvation of souls. Living in disobedience to God's law will cause people to lose their souls.

**There is no way to separate our marriages from our relationship with God.** Because marriage is God's plan, is governed by God's laws, involves choices that affect our ability to walk with God, and involves daily activity in doing the will of God, we must view it as an integral part of being a Christian. May God help us as a church to dedicate ourselves to marriage... *"in the Lord"*. †

Dan R. Owen is the preacher for the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.



# What Fathers Can Give Their Children

Bill Richardson

*“And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).*

Someone has said, “Fathers don’t have second chances”. We have one time around with our children, and we had better do it right. Here are some things fathers need to give their children.

**Give them a good mother.** Every child deserves a good, Christian mother. David had some rascals for sons, and one reason was that some of the women he married were not fit to be mothers. Fathers, if you want good children, marry a woman who will make them a good mother.

**Give them a good father.** One of the biggest sins of fathers is their failure to really be there for their children. Children need a father. They need a good father. A good father loves his children. God, the perfect father, is our example. With Him as a perfect example, we have no excuse for failing.

**A good father provides for his children.** Our Father provides for all our needs. And He demands of us that we do the same: *“If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Timothy 5:8).

**A good father disciplines his children.** God disciplines us, and we had better discipline our children if we want them to turn out right.

**Give them a good home.** Show them the right way to live. Teach them about God and His Word. Teach them the difference between right and wrong. Teach them to be good citizens. Teach them the dignity of honest labor. Worship God with them. Have fun with them. Give them precious memories that will last a lifetime.

**Give them a good name.** They wear your name. Make them proud of it.

**Give them a good church.** They will more than likely follow you in their choice of a church. Be sure you are right. *“Test all things, hold fast what is good”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

No father is perfect, but you will be appreciated if you have been honest, fair, and good to your children. Be a Christian father. Prepare your children for heaven. †

**Bill Richardson was a longtime missionary in Holland and later preached several years in the states of Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, USA.**

# An Open Letter to My Brothers in Christ

Marian Starks

I recently spoke in Denver, Colorado to a group of Christian women on the subject, “Woman’s Place in God’s Creation”. In preparing for these lessons, I revisited Genesis 3:6 and discovered a phrase that I had never noticed before. Perhaps it had never registered on my mind because I had been reading from the KJV or NASV. But in the NIV, “who was with her,” caused me to take notice and consider.



## Who Was WITH Her?!?!?

Was Adam hearing the conversation between the serpent and Eve? Paul told Timothy that “*Adam was not the one deceived*” (1 Timothy 2:14); therefore, he must have heard the conversation. Did Adam simply abdicate his leadership responsibilities? According to Romans 5:12-14, God obviously judged him guilty of something.

Did Adam fail to protect this helpmeet that God had given him? Why did he not draw her away from this evil influence? Why did Abraham not put Sarah in her place when she came up with that little plan of hers to help God out by providing a way for Abraham to have a seed? Why did Isaac not exercise his responsibility as head of his house and deal with the conflict between Esau and Jacob instead of letting Rebekah use her feminine wiles on his mind to make him think it was his idea to send Jacob to Laban to find a wife?

We all know the answer to those four questions. Man allowed Satan to use his most powerful tool to cause man to abdicate his place of leadership in God’s creation plan. And that tool is Woman! Satan also knew what would cause Eve to step out of her place as helpmeet and become the “doer” instead of the “helper”. As a woman, Eve liked pretty things, and the fruit was “*pleasing to*

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*the eye*". She also liked good things to eat, and the fruit was "good for food". And if the fruit would make her as smart as God, "Wow!! That would make me smarter than Adam", she may have reasoned. "So she took some and ate it and gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

### Satan Scores Again and Again

Oh, yes, Satan scored a point against mankind that day. "...and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned..." (Romans 5:12). He scored another point when Abraham took Hagar and conceived Ishmael (Genesis 16:1-4). And again another point when Jacob went off to Haran to find a wife among his mother's people; because it was that event that influenced Esau to find a wife among the Ishmaelites (Genesis 28:6-9). And look at what a mess the world is in today because of that union!

### Women's Lib or Adam's Rib?

In 1963, Betty Friedan, came out with her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which is credited with launching the women's liberation movement. Since that time, women have sought to invade man's world, and we've made the news doing it. Today, we are superintendents of schools, presidents of corporations, members of congress, senators, and at least one of us would like to be President. And to get where we are, we have left our place as managers of our homes (1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:4); we have put our children in day care; and we have somehow lost sight of the goals God had for us in His creation plan.

Are we any happier? Have we reached our greatest joys? Can we truly recommend our lifestyles to the next generation? Ask the psychiatrists! Ask the marriage counselors! Ask our children! Ask those of us who have "been there and done that". "Diane Passno, executive vice president at **Focus on the Family** argues that the feminist movement quickly deviated into something that ended up hurting women and disregarding children..." (*Denver Post*, Sunday, March 9, 2003, "The New Form of Feminism"). See her book, *Feminism: Mystique or Mistake* (Focus on the Family, \$16) for more comments.

In the mid-70's, when the advertisement for Virginia Slims cigarettes caught the attention of America across the TV screens, along with its little jingle, "We've Come a Long Way Baby", Christian women across the nation in college lectureships, ladies' retreats, and soul saving workshops were asking us to choose, "Women's Lib or Adam's Rib"?

Now, the 21st Century has opened with another sound, a sound that greatly disturbs a vast majority of Christian sisters. We haven't said much about it yet.

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

We hoped we would not have to.

### **Brethren: We Need Your Help**

God has commissioned us older women in Titus 2:3,4 to share with younger women what life has taught us the hard way. We want them to know that *“in Christ there is neither male nor female”* (Galatians 3:28), and we are all heirs of the same blessings of eternal life. But in our relationships with man, we were created to fulfill different roles. We need your help to keep us from losing sight of those roles!

We beg you, our brothers in Christ, to P---L---E---A---S---E! be our HEAD! (1 Corinthians 11:3). Be our AUTHORITY! (1 Timothy 2:12). Please do not abdicate your place in God’s Creation: To be our LEADERS (1 Timothy 2:13), to PROTECT us from the influence of evil (1 Peter. 3:7), to PROVIDE for us that comfortable and emotionally healthy position of “submission” that our Creator wants us to have (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18,19; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

Allow us to work alongside you in His vineyard, but PLEASE, do not allow us to DO your work (Judges 4:8,9). Admonish us that we are scripturally supported to be your helpers (Genesis 2:18), that we have a place alongside you (Ephesians 5:22-31), and that we were created to complete your very existence (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:8,9). But PLEASE remind us that we are also scripturally limited by our submission to man (Genesis 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:34,35). And exhort us with the leadership responsibility that God has bestowed upon you (1 Corinthians 11:3) that there are so many ways in which women can serve the Lord that it is never necessary or right for us to move out of our God created place.

When you see us listening to Satan’s lies, tempting us to look at the fruit of leadership, to dream of the joy of showing off our scholarship, to taste the thrill of participating in leading even the most minor activity of worship, please do not look the other way like Adam did. Please do not permit us to be used as a tool of Satan like Eve was. Please know that we are grateful to have been made from Adam’s rib.

“...not made out of man’s head, to rule over him,  
Nor out of his feet, to be trampled on by him.  
But out of his side, to be equal with him,  
Under his arm, to be protected,  
And near his heart, to be loved.”

— Matthew Henry



**Marian Starks is the widow of Donald P. Starks (deceased 1/1/94) and lives in Tyler, Texas, USA.**

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## PROVERBS 17:22

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This fellow was walking along the beach one day and ran across a lamp. He picked it up and rubbed it, and a genie popped out. The genie told him he would grant the man three wishes.

“First,” the guy began, “I’d like a million dollars.”

POOF! A million dollars was suddenly showing on his checkbook balance.

“Second,” he said, “I’d like a new Mercedes.”

POOF! A Mercedes appeared right in front of him.

“Third,” he said with a quirky smile, “I’d like to be irresistible to women.”

POOF! He turned into a box of chocolates.



A guy with a Doberman Pinscher says to a guy with a Chihuahua, “Let’s go over to that restaurant and get something to eat.”

The guy with the Chihuahua says, “We can’t go in there. We’ve got dogs with us.”

The guy with the Doberman says, “Just follow my lead.”

They walk over to the restaurant and the guy with the Doberman puts on a pair of dark glasses, and he starts to walk in. An employee at the door says, “Sorry, no pets allowed.”

The guy with the Doberman says, “You don’t understand. This is my blind dog.”

The man at the door says, “A Doberman Pinscher?” The guy answers, “Yes, they’re using them now, they’re very good.” The employee says, “OK. Come on in.”

The guy with the Chihuahua figures, “Why not,” so he puts on a pair of dark glasses and starts to walk in.

The man at the door says, “Sorry, pal, no pets allowed.”

The guy with the Chihuahua says, “You don’t understand. This is my blind dog.”

The man at the door says, “A Chihuahua?”

The guy with the Chihuahua says, “You mean they gave me a Chihuahua?”



An old Indian was asked what his wife’s name was. He said, “Three Horse.”

“That’s an unusual name, ‘Three

## PROVERBS 17:22

Horse.’ What does it mean?”

“It’s an old Indian name. Means ‘Nag, Nag, Nag.’”



Did you know that dolphins are so intelligent that within only a few weeks of captivity, they can train humans to stand at the edge of the pool and throw them fish?



My boss was complaining in our staff meeting the other day that he wasn’t getting any respect. Later that morning he went to a local sign shop and bought a small sign that read,

“I’m the Boss.” He then taped it to his office door.

Later that day, when he returned from lunch, he found that someone had taped a note to the sign that said, “Your wife called – she wants her sign back!”



A Texas farmer went to Australia for a vacation. He met an Aussie farmer and started talking with him. The Aussie showed off his big wheat field, and the Texan said, “Oh! We have wheat fields that are at least twice this size.”

Then they walked around the ranch a little, and the Aussie showed off his herd of cattle. The Texan immediately

said, “We have longhorns that are at least twice as large as your cows.”

About that time the Texan saw a herd of kangaroos hopping through the field. He asked,

“And what in the world are those?”

The Aussie replied, “Oh, don’t you have any grasshoppers in Texas?”



A New York retail clerk was suffering from aching feet. His doctor told him, “It’s all those years of standing. You need a vacation. Go to Miami, soak your feet in the ocean and you’ll feel better.”

When the man got to Florida, he went into a hardware store, bought two large buckets, and headed for the beach.

“How much for two buckets of that seawater?” he asked the lifeguard.

“A dollar a bucket,” the lifeguard answered with a straight face.

The clerk paid him, filled his buckets, went to his hotel room and soaked his feet. They felt so much better he decided to repeat the treatment that afternoon. Again he handed the lifeguard two dollars. The young man took the money and said, “Help yourself.”

The clerk started for the water, then stopped in amazement. The tide was out.

“Wow!” he said, turning to the lifeguard. “Some business you got here!”

# Not Alone

**Alex Gibson**

*“My God my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?”* It is perhaps the most disturbing question Jesus asked and, in fact, in the context of Who asked it and what was going on, it may be the most frightening question in all of eternity. Here is a Man, who is the Father’s only begotten Son, doing exactly what was planned from before creation and being obedient even to the point of death; a Man who has had the most intimate walk with



God in all of the human experience; a Man who was without sin and was being killed in one of the most brutal ways humanity has invented — and, this Man, God abandons! This Man, God lets die alone? What hope have we, then, who are stained through and through with sin?

This is one of the darkest places a soul can be: Abandoned, alone, in pain, and slowly dying. Often, today, people experience a similar void. I have seen it start with the angry kid at school whose parents are never there, to the graduate wondering what comes next in life or how to pay his debts, to the father whose family is scattered to the four winds, and to the elderly at death’s door unsure if their lives meant anything to anyone.

This is the death of the soul that happens over a lifetime of unattended spiritual wounds and unanswered questions. Most of us are content to say that when Jesus asked that question He was taking on our sin, and *that* was when the Father left Him. We then hurry on to the rest of the story, to get to Jesus being raised from the dead.

But there’s still that nagging question: Does God abandon people in their darkest hour? I have been in many a dark corner of the human soul and can safely say the answer is, “No”. That smothering feeling of a dry and dark consuming fire eating away at life is in fact a subtle lie from Hell and nothing more.”

The cry from Jesus at His death, asking why God had forsaken Him, is in fact, the final experience needed for Him to have the full human experience, and thus to be our Savior. If that had never happened, then darkness would

## HEY YOU KIDS!

have its most powerful lie — the lie that Jesus was not fully human, having never been apart from God. It would also mean that Jesus could not relate to you when you feel abandoned. This is perhaps the single greatest act of mercy to humanity, though it seems unbelievably cruel.

So how does that experience of His help me? It still means that God abandoned Jesus, doesn't it? Yes and no. At that point, Jesus was feeling, as a human, a separation from God that He had never known before. But The Father never left Him, just as God never left Moses even in spite of the fact that Moses killed a man and was guilty of doubt. And don't forget that God was with His people all through the Old Testament, even when they were sinning and inventing evil. In fact, if you take humanity as a whole, we always fall short, and yet, God never leaves us, ever trying to get our attention, ever trying to shine a healing light into our lives even before we accept His love. God's love does not abandon and does not fail... anyone... ever. In fact, the only way it ever does is *if we refuse it*.

So, then, why do so many have such a sickness of the soul? Because shadows have a way of swallowing people and making monsters seem much bigger than they really are. God has power enough to save you and bring you through any storm, even if that storm happens to be frightening and is all that we can see. The Bible tells us many times to be bold and to trust God. You see, evil has lost the *war* already, and so can only win the *individual* battles against each of us. But it cannot do so by fighting *God*, so it must do so by fighting *us*, by dragging us away and fooling us into thinking we are on our own, that we are alone, facing unseen monsters far larger than we are facing.

Just as in 2 Kings 6:15-17, when Elisha and his attendant were looking out at the vast army arrayed against them, those that are with us are more than those against us; we just may not be able see it.

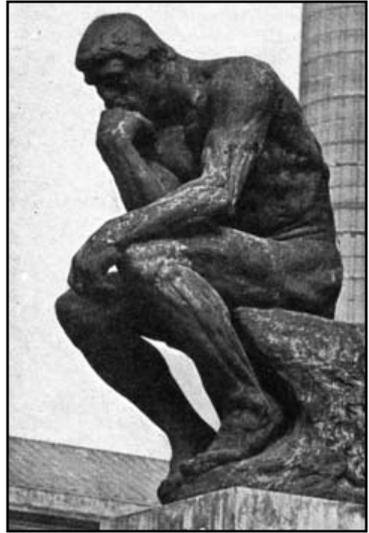
This article is more of a rallying cry than anything else. It is one weary traveler encouraging another, not because my burden is easy — in fact, mine is at times all I can bear — but because I have a Savior who understands where I am when I'm at my lowest, the Savior who made it to the victorious end. It is the great relief of Christian love to know that we have such a finish already won for us and that we simply need to run the race set before us, because God is there with us every step of the way and we are not, in fact, alone. If you yourself are in the shadows, come out into the light. It's bright and a bit much at first, but it's good. And if you are already in the light, aside from staying there, go help someone who isn't! Believe me, they're everywhere. †

For feedback email Alex Gibson at [zex1@hotmail.com](mailto:zex1@hotmail.com)

# Thinking Which Yields Peace

Gary C. Hampton

*“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).*



Those things given thoughtful consideration will have a great impact on one's life (Proverbs 23:7; 4:23; Matthew 12:34). Knowing this, Paul gave a list of things to think on. He would have Christians think on “*true things*”, which would be things in accord with God's Word (John 17:17). “*Noble things*” would be reverend, serious, combining a sense of gravity and dignity. The word “*just*” indicates right conduct. “*Pure*” is used only for those things not contaminated. Pleasing and agreeable things would be “*lovely*.” Only those things with a good reputation would qualify as being “*of good report*”.

*The New Bible Commentary: Revised* suggests that “virtue is moral excellence”. Paul wanted the church at Philippi to love so as to show a moral excellence and praiseworthy type of conduct. To do that, he told them they would have to give close attention to those things just mentioned.

Paul had both taught them and shown them how to live the Christian life. So, he urged them to go on from right thought to right action (1 Corinthians 11:1). Such would result in God, who is the source of peace, being with them (Philippians 4:9; compare verse 7). †

**Gary C. Hampton is the preacher for the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.**

## TEXTUAL STUDIES

# *Seven Hated Things*

Charles Box

All seven of these things are hated by God because any one of the seven can mar the godliness and beauty of a life. *“These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren”* (Proverbs 6:16-19). God hates these things because they violate every principle of decency and morality. They are sins against God and man.

- **GOD HATES A PROUD LOOK:** God is never pleased with prideful, haughty things. Pride is an offense against the holiness of God. Pride always leads to unkindness and irreverence.
- **GOD HATES A LYING TONGUE:** A lying tongue destroys through untrue statements. Lying always comes from an impure heart. Lies always hurt. They destroy good names, disappoint, and hurt others and God.
- **GOD HATES HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD:** Shedding innocent blood shows an ultra lack of sympathy for God’s creation. Those who shed innocent blood are out of tune with their Maker.
- **GOD HATES A HEART THAT DEVISES WICKED PLANS:** Such a life is spiritually rotten inside. When the heart is wicked, the life will be wicked. Some hearts are so bad they are always inventing ways to do evil (Genesis 6:5).
- **GOD HATES FEET THAT ARE SWIFT IN RUNNING TO EVIL:** Some are eager to do that which is unholy. They do not wait, they do not walk, they instead *run* to evil. They not only do wrong, but they do it eagerly.
- **GOD HATES A FALSE WITNESS WHO SPEAKS LIES:** Because of false witnesses, good men have suffered and evil men have escaped. A slanderer is a thief as he robs others of good reputations and the confidence of friends.
- **GOD HATES ONE WHO SOWS DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN:** This person tries to undo the good done by faithful brethren. *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (Psalm 133:1).

## TEXTUAL STUDIES

Christians must hate what God hates and love what God loves. To become a Christian, hear (Romans 10:17), believe (Mark 16:16), repent (Acts 17:30), confess (Acts 8:37), and be baptized (Acts 2:38). After baptism, allow Christ to be formed in you (Galatians 4:19). †

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

# Murder vs. Anger

Thomas Baxley

In a long section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus contrasted the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees with the spirit of the Law. In the first of this section, Jesus dealt with murder versus anger. The Jews were told that murder was a sin. It was a violation of the sixth commandment, “*Thou shalt not murder*” (Exodus 20:14 NASB; “*Thou shalt not kill*” KJV). What we have to infer here is that though they were teaching that murder is wrong, hate and anger permissible.

It seems as though they were teaching that it is fine to be angry with one’s brothers (“*without cause*” KJV) and to hate them. You could call them all sorts of evil names (“*Raca*” or empty-headed) and say bad things about them (“*fool*” Matthew 6:22), and that would be okay because no one was actually, physically killed.

The Law says “*Do not kill*”, but Jesus said not to hate or to be angry (“*without cause*”). Remember, also, that the Law says, “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:18).

**Our relationship with God is important, but our relationship with our fellow man can hinder that relationship with God.** This is why Jesus taught that if a brother has something against another brother, he should go and make it right with him before giving his offering (Matthew 5:23-24). We cannot be angry people if we wish to enter into the kingdom of heaven! †

Thomas Baxley preaches for the Highway 9 Church of Christ in Piedmont, Alabama, USA.



## Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

**Our plea: Let these verses of promise  
speak for themselves:**

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and **you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**” (Acts 2:38).

And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is **the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him** (Acts 5:32).

“But **he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him**. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against **his own body**.

19 “Or do you not know that **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God**, and you are not your own?

20 “For you were bought at a price; therefore **glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s**” (1 Corinthians 6:17-20).

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **you are the temple of the living God**. As God has said: **“I will dwell in them** And walk among them. I will be their God,

**Acts 2:38; 5:32**

**Romans 8:9-11**

**1 Corinthians 6:17**

**1 Corinthians 6:17,20**

**2 Corinthians 6:16**

**Galatians 4:6,7**

**Ephesians 3:16,17**

And they shall be My people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

And because you are sons, **God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts**, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Galatians 4:6,7).

... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; **that you may be filled with all the fullness of God** (Ephesians 3:16,17).

# *A Prince and a Great Man*

Betty Tucker

We meet Abner, the son of Ner, captain of Saul's army, in 2 Samuel 2:8. He was King Saul's cousin. At Saul's death, Abner chose his youngest son, Ishbosheth, to be king over all of Israel, except Judah, which was allied with David (verses 9,10).

Joab was David's general. His brother, Asahel, pursued Abner relentlessly. Abner warned Asahel several times, but he refused to turn aside from following him (2:19-22).

Abner eventually killed Asahel, causing a bitter feud between the families. The armies fought, and Abner was defeated. Twenty of David's men were killed, but Abner's losses numbered 360 (2:30,31).

Abner decided that he would like to be allied with David. He took 20 men to David's camp in Hebron to discuss the matter (3:20). David made a great feast, and the alliance was formed. Joab was angered because Abner had gone out to gather all of Israel to be under David's command. He sent servants to bring Abner to him, but David knew not of this.

When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab killed him to avenge the death of his brother, Asahel. When David learned of the death of Abner, he mourned, and all of the people wept.

Reading 2 Samuel 3:38, we hear King David's lament for his fallen friend...  
*"Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"* †

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

**Many a funeral sermon in modern times for stalwart Christian resound with this refrain, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"**

## BIBLE CHARACTERS

# *Sapphira, a Withered Flower*

**Bonnie Rushmore**

Some women in the Bible are naturally associated with their spouses. When we think of Eve, we naturally think of Adam. When Sarah is mentioned, one naturally thinks of Abraham; mention Priscilla and Aquila comes to mind. Ananias and Sapphira are another couple naturally associated together in Scripture. Our study of Sapphira cannot be separated from Ananias and his actions.

The name Ananias means, “Jehovah is gracious”. Sapphira means, “beautiful”. As we will see, this couple did not live up to the names they were given. Before we look at the verses about Ananias and Sapphira, we need to back up to Acts Chapter Two for a brief history lesson.

On the day of Pentecost, many Jews gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate this Jewish feast day. It was on this day that Peter preached the first recorded Gospel sermon. Several Jews were baptized into Christ (Acts 2:41). Many of these individuals were not residents of Jerusalem; they were visiting for a predetermined amount of time for the purpose of celebrating Pentecost. After obeying the Gospel, they chose to remain in Jerusalem for the purpose of learning more about Christ and His church from the apostles. Quite possibly, the length of their stay exceeded the monetary provisions they brought with them. The love and concern these early Christians had for one another prompted those living in Jerusalem to sell some of their possessions to provide for the needs of fellow Christians (Acts 2:45; 4:34,35).

This brings us to Acts 4:36-37. Barnabas, a faithful Christian, saw his brothers and sisters in Christ were in need of daily provisions. He then sold a piece of property and gave the money to the apostles, who distributed it to those in need.

Chapter Five begins with Ananias and Sapphira, also faithful Christians, deciding that they would sell property, purposing to give money to the apostles as Barnabas had done for those in need. Unfortunately, they chose to portray themselves as greater givers than they were. Together, they decided to tell that

## BIBLE CHARACTERS

they sold the land for a certain price and gave all of that amount to the church. In reality, they sold the land for one price, kept part of the money for themselves and gave the remainder to the church, stating that they gave the full sale price.

Ananias arrived where some of the Jerusalem church had gathered and laid a bag of money at the feet of the apostles. Peter asked Ananias why he lied to the Holy Spirit and emphasized that the land and the money was his to do with as he chose. Upon hearing the words of Peter, Ananias dropped dead. Young men who were present immediately carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later, Sapphira, not knowing the fate of her husband, arrived. Peter questioned her about the sale of property, and she readily agreed with what her husband had stated. Peter rebuked her for conspiring with Ananias to lie to God, and Sapphira dropped dead and was buried beside her husband.

Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of lying to God and man. They were also guilty of the sin of hypocrisy in that they were trying to portray themselves as faithful Christians when in reality they were the servants of the devil.

When reading this biblical account, several questions come to mind. Some of the questions are answered in Scripture while others are for curiosity only, and the answers are not necessary to comprehend the lesson outlined in these verses.

Let us take a brief look at these questions:

1. Why did Ananias and Sapphira arrive at the assembly at different times? If you were to ask some of the men of the congregation that question, some would say, "Because Sapphira was not ready to leave on time." While that may be true of some women, and men, today, the Scriptures do not answer this question. We do know that the early church met daily in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 5:12). This, probably, was not a Lord's Day assembly, but one of the daily assemblies those who could, and wanted to, attended.
2. How could Sapphira not hear about her husband's death during the three-hour interval? The Scriptures do not answer this question. However, Gareth Reese, in his commentary on the Book of Acts, gives two possible answers.

One of the first things done in the case of death is to notify the next of kin. That she has not been notified leads us to suppose that some command from Peter or one of the other apostles had been given to the people to keep the miraculous event quiet. Especially is this true if Ananias had been stricken dead in a public assembly. The only other explanation why someone present had not gone to inform Sapphira might be that those present were wholly given to some silent self-examination. The power

## BIBLE CHARACTERS

of God to reveal the intents and thoughts of the heart struck home with such force that every person just might concern himself with his own secret thoughts and be fervently seeking the favor of divine mercy. (206)

Both of these explanations seem plausible.

3. Why was God so swift and harsh in punishing these two? First, we must remember God knows the hearts of men (Mark 2:1-12). Second, the church was in its early stages. God was still working miracles to confirm His Word. Third, if this type of sin had continued, the credibility of the apostles and the Lord's church would have been hindered. Besides these observations, this question is answered in Acts 5:11, "*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*" Verse thirteen further explains only those who were sincere assembled with the saints.
4. Why were Ananias and Sapphira not told of their sin and given an opportunity to repent? Peter questioned Ananias and explained the circumstances surrounding his actions before God struck him dead. Also, God knows the hardness of a man's heart (Mark 3:1-6). Ananias was fully aware of his sin. Sapphira had three hours to think about the lie she had agreed with her husband to tell. Peter gave her an opportunity to recant the lie when he asked, "*Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?*" (Acts 5:8). She chose at that moment not to repent, but to promote the sin that she and her husband plotted and fulfilled. She had her opportunity to repent and chose not to repent.

One more question comes to mind when studying this biblical account of a husband and wife trying to deceive God. Could Sapphira have refused to participate and promote the sin Ananias proposed? Ananias and Sapphira were members of the Lord's church; the new law was now in effect. It was never God's intention for women to be inferior to men. God created males and females to be equal. However, God chose different **roles** for men and women. Men were and are to have authority in the church and in the home. Women do not have leadership roles in the church (1 Timothy 2:11,12; 1 Corinthians 14:34), and wives must submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:21-31). This does not mean that husbands are to be harsh and unkind. Every group of people, whether it is the home or an organization of some kind, must have someone who has the final say in a matter. God has outlined that that individual is the husband in the home or the men in the church. That is God's plan. We must not and cannot change it in anyway. So, we ask the question, again. Could Sapphira have refused to

## BIBLE CHARACTERS

participate with her husband in this sin?

We must conclude YES! The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not a spur of the moment action. It was planned and discussed. Sapphira could have pointed out the errors of trying to deceive God. If unable to dissuade Ananias from following through with his evil plan, Sapphira should have refused to participate.

Under the Old Law, family individuals were warned not to support or participate in sin with a loved one (Deuteronomy 13:6-8). Sapphira should have been aware of this biblical passage. Jesus further taught in Matthew 19:29 that those who forsake family members in order to serve Christ will be rewarded. Also, Matthew 10:37 records Jesus teaching that we must love Him more than our family members. God must come first at ALL COST. We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). We cannot excuse Sapphira's actions by saying, "She had to obey her husband." From all indications in the Scriptures, Sapphira was a willing, active participant in the sin recorded in Acts 5:1-11. Sapphira, whose name means beautiful, died an early death as a withered flower.

Adam and Eve, Sarah and Abraham, Ananias and Sapphira, and Priscilla and Aquila are couples mentioned in the Bible. Each of these women was equal in God's eyes. Each had the ability to know right from wrong. Three of them chose to "go along" or outright encourage a sinful act. One stood by her husband in the good deeds they did.

Where are you in your relationship with your husband? Are you a help or a hindrance in his service to God? Are you encouraging him to sin as Eve did with Adam? Are you going along with sinful acts as Sarah and Sapphira did, afraid to take a stand for the truth or using the excuse, "I must be submissive to my husband?" Remember Moses' teaching in Deuteronomy. We can neither allow our husbands to encourage us to sin, nor can we allow them to keep us from serving God (Matthew 10:37; 19:29). †

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Bonnie Rushmore is a staff writer for the *The Voice of Truth International* as well as a layout person. She and her husband live in Winona, MS, USA where they and others cooperate to help perpetuate the long-standing missionary work of the late J.C. Choate.

**God must come first at ALL COST.  
We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).**

# 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 father was Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians.
2. I killed many of God's prophets in Israel.
3. I provided food for hundreds of the prophets of Baal.
4. I encouraged my husband to worship idols and turn away from God.
5. I had a man falsely accused and killed when he would not sell his vineyard to my husband.
6. My name is often synonymous with wickedness.
7. God told Elijah that I would die and be eaten by dogs.
8. I died when servants threw me out the window at the request of Jehu.
9. When Jehu sent men to bury me, the dogs had already eaten me.
10. My husband was King Ahab.



See answer on inside back cover

**My Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

# In What Sense Should a Christian Pray for the Holy Spirit? (Luke 11:13)

**Wayne Jackson**

The admonition to “ask” the Father for the “Holy Spirit” would be difficult if isolated from complementary information elsewhere in the New Testament. However, consider the following:

1. One is not to petition God for the Spirit involving any supernatural endowment. Holy Spirit baptism, for example, was limited to the apostles (Acts 2) and to the first Gentiles ushered into the church (Acts 10). A lesser bestowal, though miraculous, was exclusively through the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:18; 19:6). Since miraculous signs were for the confirmation of the Gospel in that era before the Scriptures were completed (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3), these gifts were terminated when the “perfect” (literally, completed) thing was achieved (1 Corinthians 13:6ff).
2. The encouragement of Luke 11:13 obviously does not refer to the Spirit gift that is provided to new Christians at baptism (Acts 2:38; Galatians 4:6). [Note: while some see the “*gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38) as miraculous, I do not believe the evidence supports this view.]
3. What, then, is the meaning of Luke 11:13? We must compare this text with its parallel in Matthew’s Gospel (7:7-11). While Luke speaks of the Holy Spirit being given, Matthew employs in its place the expression “*good things*,” e.g., the necessities of life. Matthew’s emphasis is upon the blessings received, while Luke’s focus is upon the divine Source! These parallel texts thus suggest that the Spirit of God operates in the realm of providential activity, resulting in the good things that richly bless our lives. In this sense, the Christian may pray for the operation of the Holy Spirit to be effectual in his life. †

Wayne Jackson is the Editor of *Christian Courier* and lives in Stockton, California, USA.

## BIBLE QUESTIONS

# Would You Answer the Following Questions About the Lord's Supper?

**Ken Tyler**

**Who instituted it?** Jesus (Matthew 26:26-30).

**When?** The night of His betrayal by Judas (1 Corinthians 11:23).

**Why?** To establish a lasting memorial until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:23).

**What was used?** Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Luke 22:1,18,19).

**Who were there?** Jesus and the 12 apostles (Matthew 26:20).

**What did Jesus tell each person to do?** To eat the bread in memory of His body, and to drink the cup in memory of His blood (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).

**Where was this new memorial feast to be placed?** In His kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

**What did the apostles do with it after Jesus sent them the Holy Spirit?** They made the Lord's Supper an act of worship in the church (Acts 2:41,42).

**How often did the church observe the memorial feast?** It was a weekly observance on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

**Where was it eaten?** In the church assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18).

**Who ate?** Disciples of Christ/Christians.

**What was each person exhorted to do?** Examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28).

**Was it possible to do it unworthily?** Yes. One could eat and drink without discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29).

**What else is this feast called?** A communion (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Is there a church where one can observe this simple memorial feast in honor of Christ? Yes. We in the churches of Christ observe it every first day of the week as nearly as possible like Jesus said to do. †

**Ken Tyler has preached several years for the Arab Church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.**

# God Speaks Today

Hebrews 1:1,2; Matthew 17:5

J.C. Choate

## INTRODUCTION

- A. God had spoken in every period of time.
- B. He speaks today.
- C. He does so to reveal His will.
- D. But how does God speak today?

## DISCUSSION

### I. Many are deceived concerning how God speaks today (Acts 8,9,10).

- A. He does not speak directly.
- B. He does not speak through dreams and visions.
- C. He does not speak through an angel.

### II. How God speaks today.

- A. He speaks through His Son.
- B. He speaks through the Word (John 20:30,31).
- C. Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).

### III. The Importance of God's Word

- A. He is giving man the Truth (John 8:32).
- B. It is all inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
- C. Not to add to it or subtract

from it ) Revelation 22:18,19).

- D. Not to substitute for it (Galatians 1:6-9).
- E. Will be judged by it (John 12:48).
- F. It is perfect (James 1:25).

### IV. What it tells us

- A. We are sinners (Romans 3:23).
- B. Christ is the Savior (Luke 19:10).
- C. What to do to be saved (Mark 16:15,16).
- D. All about the church (Ephesians 5:23).
- E. How to worship (John 4:24).
- F. The Christian Life (Colossians 3:17).
- G. Where we will spend eternity (Matthew 25:46).

## CONCLUSION

- A. Must hear and obey (Matthew 7:24,27).
- B. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only. †

J. C. Choate (1932-2008) was the founding Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

# No Home Down Here

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Curtis Camp

## Introduction

- A. Paul to Timothy, *“Timothy, this is my last letter to write. I am about to be sacrificed – my life is about to be poured out – the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now the crown for doing right awaits me – it is the victor crown for being right with God and for doing right. My Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me that great day. But not only to me, but unto all who have loved and yearned to hear His welcome at His appearing.”*
- B. Our Lord does have a home for us (John 14:1-3).
- C. It will be our eternal home (2 Corinthians 5:1).
- D. Remember when we used to sing, “I Am Bound For The Promised Land”, “In The Sweet By and By”, “When I Can Read My Title Clear”?
- E. We are warned against the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10), the cares of the world (Mark 4:19), loving this world (1 John 2:15), laying up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20).
- F. He also tells us that man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesses (Luke 12:15).
- G. And, our Lord proved it with the account of the “Successful Farmer” (Luke 12:16-21).

## I. We are forbidden to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2).

- A. Who inspires us today?
  - 1. The successful big shot. How we admire him.
  - 2. We use the same standards the world uses to try to glorify with our religious phraseology. We appear to be at home in the world.
- B. Actually though, we are to be just a bunch of pilgrims and strangers marching through.
  - 1. But we want the church to be like a super-corporation, another big business, so much like the age in which we live – and few can tell the difference.

## CHARTS AND OUTLINES

2. It was a dark day when the church forgot that we have no home down here.

### II. The thought of heaven does not thrill us anymore.

- A. Don't hear many old-fashioned sermons about heaven.
  1. Sure, "There's A Land That Is Fairer Than Day", but most of us are not looking that far ahead; we are nearsighted
  2. We think of ourselves as citizens of the earth trying to get to heaven, but really we are the citizens of heaven just sojourning here on earth. Our rights of citizenship are in heaven.

### III. Christianity loses ground when Christians make themselves at home down here.

- A. We are spiritual sons of Abraham, not sons of Lot.
  1. We are not to settle down in Sodom. The moment we settle down, we cease to be pilgrims. We set our affections on things of the earth, while our account in heaven is bankrupt.

#### Conclusion

- A. Song, "Higher Ground". Used to make our eyes fill with tears. Does it today?
- B. It seems we settle down here. We finally reach the sad state where we no longer respond to the call from on High.
- C. What is your need today?

Christian?

2. Need to be restored to duty and faithfulness?
3. Place membership with this local church? So you can get busy bearing fruit. You know what happens when you do not? †

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

# Archaeological Digs at Jericho

**Rex Banks**

According to Scripture, in about 1407 B.C., some forty years after having left Egypt, the children of Israel took possession of the Promised Land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Of course those who reject the biblical account have proposed various theories to explain how Canaanite culture ended and how Israel came into possession of so much of the land of Canaan (e.g., the “peaceful infiltration” theory, the “peasant revolt” theory). It appears that in some quarters, any suggestion will be considered except the proposal that the scriptural record be taken seriously.

We are told that under Joshua, Israel engaged in a military conquest of the land. The fortress city of Jericho was the first to fall to Joshua, and the account of the city’s destruction accompanied by trumpet blasts and collapsing walls is well known to all. According to Britannica, “Old Testament Jericho has been identified in the mound known as Tall As-Sultan (at the source of the copious spring ‘As-Sultan) which rises 70 feet (21 m) above the surrounding plain. A number of major archaeological expeditions have worked at the site...”

Discoveries at the Jericho site by such well-known archaeologists as John Garstang and Kathleen Kenyon have given rise to decades of speculation, debate, and controversy, and we will make a comment about the central issue in a moment. But first let’s say a word about the biblical narrative in light of certain facts concerning the destruction of Jericho that archaeology has brought to light.

1) An article entitled “Jericho’s Walls Fell Down”, which appeared in *Archaeological Diggings* (Dec 1999/ Jan 2000), has the following from Garstang’s *The Story of Jericho*:

“The main defences of Jericho in the late Bronze Age... comprised two parallel walls, the outer six feet and the inner twelve feet thick. Investigations along the West side show continuous signs of destruction and conflagration. The outer wall suffered most, its remains falling down the slope. The inner wall is preserved only where it abuts the citadel, or tower to a height of 18 feet. Elsewhere it is found largely to have fallen, together with the remains of buildings upon it into the space between the walls which was filled with ruins and debris... the power that could dislodge hundreds of tons of masonry in the way described must have been superhuman. Earthquake is the only known agent capable of the demonstration of force indicated by the observed facts”.

## BIBLICAL HISTORY

Of course, the Bible also speaks of a great wall surrounded the city of Jericho and tells us that this wall “fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city” (Joshua 6:20; cf. Hebrews 11:30). Reference to the fact that the wall had “buildings upon it” reminds us that Rahab’s house was “on the city wall” (Joshua 2:15).

2) From the same article we obtain the following quote from Garstang:

“Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones, charred timbers and ashes. Houses along the wall were found burnt to the ground, their roofs fallen upon the domestic pottery within.” According to the scriptural account, “*they burned the city with fire, and all that was in it*” (Joshua 6:24).

3) In the course of summarizing the findings of Bryant Wood with respect to the destruction of Jericho, Randall Price says, “The destruction occurred at harvest time in the spring, as indicated by the large quantities of grain stored in the city.” He draws our attention to the fact that according to Scripture, Jericho was destroyed at harvest time (Joshua 3:15; 5:10).

4) Randall Price mentions two other conclusions drawn by Wood from the presence of great quantities of grain among the ruins. First, the siege was short “since the grain stored in the city was not consumed” and, second, the grain was not plundered “as was usually the case in antiquity.” Clearly this also harmonizes well with the scriptural account, which tells us that the city fell in a matter of days (Joshua 6:15,20) and that the Israelites were forbidden to take items from the city because it was “under the ban” (Joshua 6:17,18).

5) Finally, we are told that Jericho lay abandoned for a long period of time following her destruction, a fact which reminds us of the oath which Joshua extracted from the people: “Cursed before the Lord is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates” (Joshua 6:20). It was not until the time of Ahab that the city was rebuilt (1 Kings 16:34).

In light of all this, it appears that excavations at Jericho have once again supported the biblical narrative, and certainly this was Garstang’s view as a result of his work at the site in the 1930’s. Garstang dated the destruction of the city at about 1400 B.C., despite the fact that 1230-1220 B.C. was the more popular date. We recall that Scripture places the Exodus in the 480th year prior to the fourth year of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 6:1), which was likely sometime about 975, and so Garstang’s 1400 B.C. date certainly fits the biblical chronology.

However, the work of Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950’s changed the picture entirely. Kenyon concluded that the destruction took place in about 1550 B.C.,

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and that no fortified city existed on the site in 1400 B.C. What's more, she argued that a wall thought by Garstang to have been the one destroyed by Joshua was in fact from a much earlier period.

Now, the Jericho dating saga has gone on for decades, and we cannot examine the issues here, but hopefully we were able to demonstrate earlier that dating techniques involving pottery, carbon decay, cross-referencing and suchlike are not precise. For this reason it would be quite unreasonable to render a negative verdict upon the historical accuracy of Scripture simply because it fails to conform to a particular chronology by man. Rohl's new chronology is just one example of how a chronological adjustment reinstates the 1400 B.C. date for the conquest, and other proposals have been made by those who do not take Rohl's position but who accept the biblical account. Without the constraints of fallible, man-devised chronologies, the archaeological data supporting the biblical account of the conquest of Canaan is impressive.

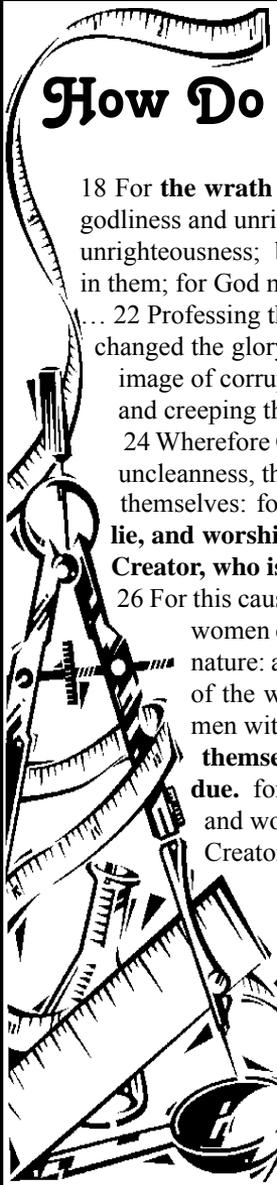
The following quote from Kenyon's book, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, is taken from an article entitled "Where Did the Israelites Come From?" which appeared in *Archaeological Diggings* magazine (April/ May 99):

"The final end of the Early Bronze Age civilisation came with catastrophic completeness. The last of the Early Bronze Age walls of Jericho was built in a great hurry, using old and broken bricks, and was probably not completed when it was destroyed by fire. Little or none of the town inside the walls has survived denudation, but it was probably completely destroyed, for all the finds show that there was an absolute break, and a new people took the place of the earlier inhabitants. Every town in Palestine that has so far been investigated shows the same break. The newcomers were nomads, not interested in town life, and they so completely drove out or absorbed the old population, perhaps already weakened and decadent, that all traces of the Early Bronze Age civilisation disappeared."

The article continues:

"'An absolute break ... a new people ... every town in Palestine ... newcomers were nomads ... completely drove out or absorbed the old population.' Could we expect to find a more apt description of the Israelite invasion, nomads from the desert who initially were not interested in living in the cities?"

The bottom line is that there is every reason to regard the archaeological evidence from Jericho as further confirmation of the historicity of the biblical account. †



# How Do You Measure Up?

18 For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them...

... 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that **they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.**

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and **receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.** for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions...

Romans 1:18-26 and through 32



FROM THE HEART OF...

# Pakistan

Gordon Hogan

While the nation of Pakistan has been in the news for many years, its proximity to Afghanistan has brought this country to center stage in south Asia. The reason for this renewed attention was the tragedy that took place when radical Islamists flew planes into the twin towers in New York, into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and into the ground in a field in Pennsylvania.

Pakistan (which in Urdu means “Pure land”) became a new nation carved from the subcontinent of India in 1947. Muslims in India, represented by the political party, The Muslim League, had agitated for independence from Great Britain for many years. The new nation, originally called East and West Pakistan, numbered more than 100 million, of which 99% were Muslims.

On November 8, 1960, our family flew to Hanover, Germany and purchased from the Volkswagen Factory in that city a camper van. From there we drove 14,000 miles through eighteen countries, expecting to settle ultimately in New Delhi, India as missionaries of the Lord’s church.

Upon arriving in Lahore, Pakistan in February of 1961, we learned that India would not grant us resident visas. We then decided to apply for visas to reside in Lahore and, by God’s providence, our request was granted. We were the first missionaries sent to this new nation by the churches of Christ.

When we arrived, the country was under martial law, led by General Ayub Khan. Eighty-five percent of the population was illiterate, and the economy was in shambles. Lahore, with a population of 1.2 million people, was the second largest city in the nation.

J.C. and Betty Choate, who had planned to plant the church in Bombay, India, were also denied visas to live in that country. One year after our arrival, they joined us and decided to settle in Karachi, the most populous city in the country, 800 miles south of Lahore. What wonderful coworkers they were.

Over the years, 1961 through 1970, four other families served in Pakistan. We remained until August 1968 when we moved to Singapore where I served as President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, while preaching for the Moulmein Road Church of Christ for the next twenty-five years.

Pakistani nationals minister to congregations of the Lord’s church in at least four major cities and in many villages.

## FROM THE HEART OF...

Military and Parliamentary style governments through the years have been unstable and have been largely influenced by Islam. A civil war in the 70's resulted in dividing off the eastern wing of the country, now known as Bangladesh (Land of the Bengals).

Over the past thirty years, radical Islamists have made life for minorities and members of the Lord's church difficult and dangerous. An article posted on an internet blog, *The Blaze* by Billy Hallowell on September 3, 2012 illustrates the danger:

“Islamabad (*The Blaze/AP*): Pakistan police are investigating whether a Muslim cleric who allegedly tried to frame a Christian girl for blasphemy should be charged with insulting Islam himself and potentially face life in prison, a police officer said Monday.

“Khalid Chisti was arrested Saturday after a member of his mosque accused him of stashing pages of a Koran in a Christian girl's bag to make it seem like she burned the Islamic holy book. He allegedly planted the evidence to push Christians out of his neighborhood in Islamabad. The case has generated significant international attention because of reports that the girl is as young as 11 and is mentally handicapped.

“Human rights activists have long criticized Pakistan's blasphemy laws, saying they are misused to persecute non-Muslims and to settle personal vendettas. They have hailed Chisti's arrest as unprecedented and hope it will prevent false blasphemy accusations in the future...”

## **Continuation** **Betty Burton Choate**

I appreciate the brief history that brother Hogan has given as a background of the work in Pakistan. Truly, it was a different world when the Hogans, the Choates, the Pettys, and others worked there. Militant Islam has grown tremendously, reshaping the thinking of the general populace concerning those who would profess Christianity or who would want to share the Gospel with others.

We left the work in Karachi in the fall of 1967. Others followed, but it has now been many, many years since foreigners worked in Pakistan. Some of those who were converted have died, some have moved to other places, some newer people have inherited the responsibility of the work. Local Christians, not having the benefit of the older and more spiritually mature Christians to keep the doctrine pure, and being prey to the rampant denominational thinking among the few “Christians” with whom those leaders in the church would associate, our concern

## FROM THE HEART OF...



**That young Choate family**

is that error has crept into some congregations. For this reason, we have asked Asghar Ali, a brother trained at Four Seas College in Singapore, and one who has faithfully endured many things, to visit churches in Karachi and also to meet and study with the newly converted brother in Hyderabad.

### **Shahid Khokhar**

We rejoice in this good news of a new church of our Lord in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Shahid Iqbal Khokhar was recently baptized at Sahiwal, Punjab Bible College, after studies through World Bible School and one of our East Ridge teachers! Shahid wrote this email message to his teacher, Mary McKinney: “Let me tell you the journey toward the truth of the Gospel. I was born in Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, in 1975 in a Roman Catholic family.

“My parents were strict Roman Catholics and asked us to attend and pray regularly in the church. As I was growing in the faith, I was becoming stronger in my beliefs and became more mature in my thoughts. One of the cousins of my father became the priest of Roman Catholic church, and this made me look closer into the lives of priests of that church. I became completely discouraged and disappointed when I looked at the bad and corrupt deeds of Catholic priests of Toba Tek. My father also came to know about this, and then he also never encourage us to go to the church.

“When I married Jennifer in the year 2005, I saw that she and her family were deeply involved in the Roman Catholic church in Hyderabad. I became much impressed, and again I started following the Catholic Church. In the first two years of our marriage we observed that no one from the Catholic Church gave attention to my family in sharing the Gospel and talking about Jesus Christ.

“Again, I became disappointed. In the meantime, Jennifer’s cousin, who is Pentecostal, asked us to join their church. Slowly and gradually Jennifer’s family and I started coming toward Pentecostalism and forgot the Roman Catholic Church. But, still I had thirst in my mind and heart to know more about the true Gospel which was not delivered in the messages of Pentecostal preachers. Their focus was only on speaking in tongues. I never agreed with such practice of

## FROM THE HEART OF...

tongues and could not understand why people talk in languages which they themselves cannot understand.

“Once, when we were attending the Pentecostal church, everyone was crying and shouting aloud. This scared our little son, Sterling, and he started crying bitterly. In another service, one of the pastors came and wanted me to fall on the ground just to show the power of the Holy Spirit, and he was continuously pushing me by keeping his hand on my forehead.

“This thing really made me think, ‘Was it a prayer or something else?’ I had never experienced such a situation and it really made me embarrassed. At that moment, we decided not to attend the Pentecostal meetings again. We had never agreed on the teachings and attitude of Pentecostals, as they did not satisfy us.

“After that, we thought that somehow we should affiliate ourselves to *some* church just to show ourselves Christians, and Jennifer and I started going to a Protestant church, as Jennifer’s parents told us to do so because they are also the members of Protestant church now, although they were baptized in a Pentecostal church. But they also have some reservations and are no longer members of that church.

“We attended the meetings of Protestants also, but still the message from the Bible was not clearly and exactly given in any of the churches. By the beginning of 2010, it seemed that in everything and everywhere there was something missing. We stopped going to any church and decided not to join any congregation, but we would simply pray to God at our own home, with the people who would like to listen to the Word of God in its true sense without adding or deleting anything in the given verses.

“In April, when I was browsing the Internet, I found this [World Bible School] website and registered myself, with the belief that somehow I would study from the Bible to increase my knowledge of being a Christian.

“The early course inspired me, and I gradually got a lot of answers regarding Holy Spirit, baptism, and the church. The best thing which influenced me is the truth of the Gospel for which I had longed for more than 10 years of my life.

“This was the time when I realized and told Jennifer that we should go for this course as we will not only increase our knowledge of the Bible but we can also become true Christians who only follow the teachings of Christ, and the focus is always Christ.



**Shahid and Jennifer Khokhar**

## FROM THE HEART OF...

“Here I would also thank God that He provided us with such an encouraging study helper who clarified all the questions in our minds, and the love and dedication for the work of Christ is visible through her correspondence and emails.

“Now the Lord’s Church at Hyderabad is in its initial stage of establishment. People show their thirst of hearing the Word of God exactly as it is written in the Gospel. They welcome us and show their affection toward us as we read the Gospel in front of them. I believe that it is the result of our constant prayers to God and the thirst to find the truth of Gospel and our sincerity and commitment, and of course the blessings of God made us this much capable that He has filled our hearts with His love and grace.



“May the Lord bless us all who are in the Lord’s family on this earth.”

Since this letter was written, others have been worshipping in the Khokahars’ home. There have been about 20 baptisms to date. Their baptistry is an inflatable swimming pool purchased with funds donated by Shahid’s WBS teacher, Mary, and her husband.

### Difficulties in the Church

I am copying a letter Shahid sent recently to Mary, so that you can be aware of some of the difficulties faced by Christians living in a country that is 98% Muslim (and an increasing number of these being radical Islamists). Shahid had written to Mary of their financial difficulties, and she had suggested that some of the Christians could help them with vegetables from their gardens, share eggs from their chickens, and also find other ways to support their preacher:

“You know, the previous week there was no electricity for more than 36 hours and we remain in dark without cold water and not even much water for cleaning or washing and you can imagine with a six month old kid how difficult it would be to manage. The house in which we live does not have any balcony, no roof for us and no verandah or anything where we can stay when the fans are not working, so we have to use some hard sheet or paper for the breeze to the kids at least when they are sleeping.

## FROM THE HEART OF...

“The other thing that you have mentioned, regarding the church people and their services to the preacher. Well, let us inform you about them: they belong to the poor families and are considered as the lowest income earners because some of them are sweepers, servants at the houses, maids’ persons in schools, etc. There is only one family who are educated, working as nurses in different hospitals and also active in Bible study, and they also live in the same house like us but at a different place. These church people are scattered in the town. There is no one who has any garden sort of thing in the house. People live in slum areas where there are no proper roads or streets. There is no concept of backyard or garden, and in some houses there is only one room for 5 to 7 members of the family, so how can you ask them to make a space for an animal in the house. I think you can understand what we are talking about.

“All the situations that we have mentioned are already witnessed by brother Asghar and his wife in the March 2011 and brother Chito with his friend also visited us in the last year. Have they not mentioned all about those needs of the people and the church? If they couldn’t see it or they had only been here for their own purposes, then we must ask more people to come to us for having a check on us.

“Few days back we talked to brother Asghar regarding the present situation of the Church of Christ in Pakistan, and Asghar showed his concerns by saying this that no one is ready to come to Pakistan except Chito. And we personally feel that we need to come up with practical measures to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Pakistan, and we need to clear the image of Pakistani preachers who are true to the teaching of the Church of Christ. Brother Asghar shared that some are not following the teaching of the Gospel, and these are not good for the growth of the new preachers like me, as they preached denominational teachings. We both are of opinion that someone must come to Pakistan to acknowledge the work that is required and keep a check in Pakistan and how we can assure you only these reports and pictures.

“When we go to our church people, there are 100’s of questions in their eyes for us besides the knowledge of Bible; there are other basic needs that they have to fulfill. You will not believe that couple of times we had to give money to one of the families for their food because they had nothing to eat; we can’t think to seek help from people who can’t fulfill their own basic needs. We give them our old clothes to wear. If we come to know about any of their financial problems, then with mutual concern of all the church people, we give them some amounts from the church offerings of Sundays worship, and like this there are many other things we do together to solve each other problems.

## FROM THE HEART OF...

“We are thinking to invite brother Asghar to Hyderabad for our training and for others who are interested in preaching we are working on it.

“We are determined to continue the work of the Lord under any circumstances. Heavenly God is our protector in what we do and seek. I will continue WEI lessons, yes they are of good help in my teaching and preaching. Beside these lessons from WEI and WBS, we are using other literature which we are getting from sister Choate. Majid is the student of WBS, and he is helped by me as he does not know English. In this way, I repeat lessons of WBS. Saleem and his wife are students of brother Asghar’s translated lessons in Urdu, and they come to us for studies. Jennifer did her lesson 4 days ago, but due to electricity problem it is still pending.

“In God we are happy as we serve Him. Shahid”

### Physical Danger for Christians

In another letter, Shahid was telling of neighbors who are objecting to having a church meeting in their house, and he was concerned for the safety of the Christians — thinking that they need to find a more public place (renting a shop, for instance) for the meetings, not in a home in a neighborhood. The fear is legitimate, for mobs do come together at times and assault or even kill Christians:

“Another atrocity that has just been reported concerns the murder of a young boy: The body of Samuel Yaqoob, was discovered with his lips and nose cut off, his stomach removed and his legs mutilated. According to police, the body was later burned and could hardly be recognized. Relatives identified the corpse from a distinctive mark on the boy’s forehead. Yaqoob, a resident of the Christian Colony of Faisalabad, had been missing since August 20, last seen on his way to a local market. His mutilated remains were found on Eid-Ul-Fitr holiday, which marks the end of the month-long Muslim fast of Ramadan.”

### Asghar Ali

We had asked brother Asghar Ali to visit and study with Shahid and Jennifer, and then to go on to Karachi, to assess the general situation of the church there, after many years without outside or more mature influence. This is what he wrote:

“We came back home Saturday evening after a journey of 25 and a half hours, exhausted in the true sense. We had a good time both at Hyderabad and Karachi. Brother Sajjad had arranged four meetings in Karachi, one at Bataya Abad and three in Malir Kala. The topics of the meeting suggested by the brother were ‘The Glorious Church’, ‘The Second Coming of Christ’ and ‘The Millennial Reign’ at Malir. The topic for the meeting at Bataya Abad was left to me. Sajjad had arranged our stay with one of the church members at Bataya Abad. This place is half an hour’s run by taxi from Sajjad’s place.

## FROM THE HEART OF...

“The preachers on support are four: one of these is brother Sajjad’s real brother and the other two were trained at Lahore Preachers School. One of these preachers, named Shamoon Talib, attended the meeting one day in Bataya Abad. The other two attended all four meetings. Brother Sajjad is the busiest person, involved in different responsibilities of the school started by late brother Anwar Masih. Maybe for this reason, he had no time to take us to congregations besides Bataya Abad and Malir.

“The good things noted were that:

“1. Contribution was not taken at any meeting besides Sunday service.

“2. The Lord’s prayer was not said verbatim as is done in denominations.

“3. Instruments were not used.

“4. Singing was quite good, as the whole of the congregation was familiar with the words of the songs.

“5. Their hospitality was outstanding, and they tried their best to make our stay comfortable.

### **HOWEVER...**

“1. All their meetings looked and sounded like those of denominations. Their singing was just like Pentecostals. A couple of songs had the wording, “Give us the Holy Spirit and anoint us with the Holy Spirit.”

“2. It seemed that they did like the songs composed by the locals, having no serenity and serious thought in them as is there in Sialkot Convention in which the Psalms of David are translated in the local language and the songs translated from English Hymn books. A couple of words were repeated over and over again just to match the self-made tunes.

“3. For me (Asghar) they used the title ‘The Lord’s anointed’, and during the meeting they mentioned that there was anointing of the Spirit working there.

“4. When they were preparing the church for the meeting, recorded songs with instruments were continuously played in the church building.

“5. They repeat the benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14 at the close of every meeting.

“The air of slum areas was prevailing during all these meetings, especially because no one seemed conscious about the wastage and misuse of time. The time printed on the handbills and banners was 7:00 P.M. to begin the programme. Almost two-and-a-half hours were spent on singing. This they called “paying homage to Jesus and praising Him.”

“There was food after every meeting, and hardly we reached our place of stay until 1:00 A.M., quite exhausted.

## FROM THE HEART OF...

“In a brotherly and friendly atmosphere, I pointed out that the singing with instruments, though recorded and played on cassettes, is not authorized by the Bible and gives a wrong impression about the church. Moreover, I made clear that I was not the Lord’s anointed, and there was no anointing of the Holy Spirit during the meeting.

“As Sajjad had spent so much for the arrangements of the meeting, we contributed Rs. 4000 as compensation.

“We took three books of Basic Bible Course by brother Rice, translated into Urdu, a couple of tracts by brother Perry Cotham, some Urdu tracts and six copies of Rahat’s book. Since Rahat’s book is in Urdu and tackles some of the crucial subjects, it was welcomed. We promised to mail him *The Church of the Bible* and any other material needed by him.

“They have made it a custom to welcome the guests with floral wreaths and clappings during the meetings. We advised them not do so in and during the meeting. They should do it either before or after the meeting, but if they do not do it at all it would be the best.

### In Hyderabad

“It was thrilling to meet a well-educated couple at Hyderabad who has established a church there. We were glad that Shahid Iqbal is a confident personality, one who can aggressively convince his audience of the Truth. Both husband and wife are eager to learn in depth the teachings of the Bible. We wonder if there can be a possibility for at least one of them (Shahid) to avail this opportunity.

“We had the opportunity to attend church services, and I preached for them. There were 18-20 present. Before the closing prayer, Shahid asked for a kind of chain prayer which was started by Jennifer and ended with Jennifer’s father who is not member of the church. I pointed out the mistake of chain prayer, and they accepted it gladly.

“We had taken some tracts both in English and in Urdu which could be of some help to Shahid. He and Jennifer plan to come to our area during summer vacations. He wants to visit with us, and we would be able to provide him communion cups and needful literature.”

It is our prayer that these visits can be the beginning of WVBS classes among the Christians in Lahore, Hyderabad, and Karachi, and that the Lord’s church can be preserved there through sound teachings. We ask that you who read these words to be praying for your brothers and sisters who live and work in difficult circumstances. BBC



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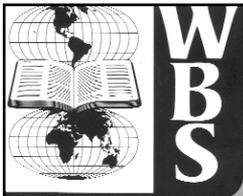
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- \* Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
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## ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

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### *Verse Search* (page 28)

1. He entreated them as brethren.
2. Living sacrifices
3. Christians are to live holy lives completely different from the world.
4. This is a scientific term referring to the change of a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. We cannot let our lives be molded by the non-Christian world around us.
5. By the renewing of our minds.
6. Good, acceptable or pleasing to God, and perfect or complete.
7. Soberly.
8. No. This warns against pride as well as a false modesty.
9. A physical body.
10. Each has some ability and we must each use what ability we have.
11. From God.
12. Use them. No one has the right to have an ability and yet simply refuse to use it.
13. No.
14. The ability to earn enough money to give and a God-given inclination to give.
15. Eagerness, zeal, and devotion, as opposed to indifference.
16. Any act of mercy towards others, such as visiting sick, caring for elderly, comforting bereaved, etc.
17. Cheerfulness.

### **Who Am I?** (page 91)

Answer: (1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 18:4, 13, 19; 21:1-16, 23, 25; 2 Kings 9:30-37)

### *Bible Find* (page 61)



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

**MORE THAN 175,000,000 PEOPLE LIVE IN THE COUNTRY OF PAKISTAN. OF THESE, 98% BELONG TO THE RELIGION OF ISLAM.**

**IF YOU HAD BEEN BORN IN A PAKISTANI VILLAGE, UNLESS YOUR PARENTS WERE OF THE LANDOWNER CLASS, IT IS LIKELY THAT YOU WOULD JOIN THE 50% OF THE POPULATION THAT IS ILLITERATE.**

**YOU WOULD BE TAUGHT ISLAM FROM THE YOUNGEST AGE, IN MADRASSA SCHOOLS AS A BOY, BUT AS A GIRL YOU WOULD PROBABLY BE PRIMARILY CONFINED TO HOME, WITH NO EDUCATION.**

**THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU WOULD EVEN KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF A BOOK CALLED THE BIBLE WOULD BE SMALL. SINCE VILLAGES DO NOT HAVE BOOKSTORES — AND CERTAINLY NOT “CHRISTIAN” BOOKSTORES — THERE WOULD BE LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU WOULD EVER HOLD A COPY OF THAT PRECIOUS BOOK IN YOUR HANDS.**

**SO WHAT POSSIBILITY IS THERE THAT YOU WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THE GOSPEL AND BE SAVED? VERY LITTLE — UNLESS YOU WERE SEARCHING, DESIRING WITH ALL YOUR HEART TO KNOW THE TRUE GOD. IN THAT CASE, GOD IN HIS PROVIDENCE WOULD BRING YOUR PATH TO CROSS WITH A MESSENGER OF THE GOSPEL, AS HE DID WITH SHAHID. NO ONE — WHO WANTS TO KNOW GOD — WILL DIE WITHOUT HAVING THAT PRIVILEGE!**