

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

Since Roe vs. Wade there have been approximately 1,600,000 babies aborted every year in the United States. That's 4,383 per day. We have aborted more babies than the total number of American soldiers killed in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan combined!



These six things the Lord hates...

Hands that shed innocent blood...

Our God

Scientists speak of stars, galaxies, even our sun as being so many “light years” away from us; that is, *the number of miles light travels in a second (186,000) multiplied by the number of seconds in a year of time* — millions and millions of miles. After traveling literally *10 billion light years*, the enormity of the Universe would be laid out as a tapestry before our eyes, with billions of galaxies made up of hundreds of billions of stars! The *infinite* size of the Universe, its complexities and even its secrets are too great for the minds of humans to comprehend.

Yet, the Creator, the Eternal Being, the holy and most supreme Spirit, the God who formed all of this by the power of His word, has taken the trouble to reveal *Himself* and *His mind* to us through the wonders of His Book, life, nature and the universe itself. Truly, the more we think on the greatness and the incomprehensibility of God, the more we sink into silent awe in His presence.

Except for some of us. Some speak of “the Old Man in the sky.” Others demand, “HEAL, Jesus!” Others make endless jokes about God, and then they laugh at the ridicule they have heaped on this holy Entity of limitless power. Today, I saw a book with the slap-in-the-face title: “Sit Down, GOD! I’m Angry.” Just who do we humans think we are?

Betty Burton Choate

The Tears of Our Lord

→ Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4

→ Weeping is One of the Universal Languages of Man →

 **HANNAH**

■ 1 Samuel 1:8

 **DAVID & PEOPLE**

■ 1 Samuel 1:30-4

 **DAVID**

■ 1 Samuel 18:33

 **PETER**

■ Luke 22:62

 **PAUL**

■ Acts 20:31



➡ **TOMB OF LAZARUS**

- John 11:35
- Wept in Sympathy for the Sorrows of Others

➡ **OVER JERUSALEM**

- Matthew 23:37
- Wept over Lost & Wasted Opportunities

➡ **GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE**

- Matthew 26
- Hebrews 5:7
- Wept in Battle

Spiritual Growth is a Choice

COMMANDED BY GOD

- Stated in Great Commission
 - Matthew 28:18-20
- Stated in the Epistles
 - 2 Peter 3:18
 - 1 Peter 1:5-8
 - Hebrews 5:12-6:1



Spiritual Growth Is a Choice A Choice!

ASSISTED BY GOD

- Not Alone in Our Efforts
 - Philippians 2:12
 - Titus 3:5
 - Philippians 1:6
- God Strengthens Our Efforts
 - Ephesians 3:16
 - Ephesians 3:20
 - Ephesians 6:10-11
 - Philippians 4:13

REQUIRES DILIGENT EFFORT

- Unlike Physical Growth
- Requires Concentrated Effort
 - John 6:27
 - Philippians 2:12: 3:13-14
 - 2 Peter 1:5-10
 - 1 Timothy 4:7-8

BLESSED BY GOD

- Blessings Begin in this Life
 - 2 Peter 3:18
 - Romans 5:1-2
 - 2 Peter 1:10
- Blessings Continue into the Life to Come
 - 2 Peter 1:10-11
 - Revelation 14:13
 - 1 Corinthians 15:58

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Associate Editor: Jerry Bates
Editor Emeritus: Byron Nichols
Founding Editor: J.C. Choate
Layout: Betty Burton Choate
Barbara Oliver
Office Manager: Paula Bates
Computer Consultants: Bradley S. Choate
Dennis Larson

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).



Religiously

Louis Rushmore

Today, religion is about the only thing that often **is not** practiced *religiously*. The adjective “religiously” in the way under consideration in this article means, “very careful to do something whenever it can or should be done” or “scrupulously and conscientiously faithful.” Synonyms include “fervent” and “zealous” (*Merriam-Webster*).

For instance, people follow sports religiously, but God-given religion is not comprised of athletics (1 Timothy 4:8). While a person may be a fan or a fanatic about something, such as sports, the general public derides religious people who exhibit conviction or what it views as excessive enthusiasm.

And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:13-17 NKJV)

While one’s devotion to sports or to hobbies meets with widespread approval or at least indifference, evidence of a person’s devotion to the God of the Bible is frowned upon many times by family, friends, coworkers, acquaintances and even by strangers (Matthew 10:34-36). How backward

is that! ***“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*** (Isaiah 5:20).

“Religiously” has been hijacked by proponents of non-religious activities, while Christians who are passionate about worship, Christian living, Christian service, Christ’s plan of salvation and Christian doctrine are seen as obsessive and compulsive religionists who too highly esteem themselves and disdain anyone not in lockstep with them.

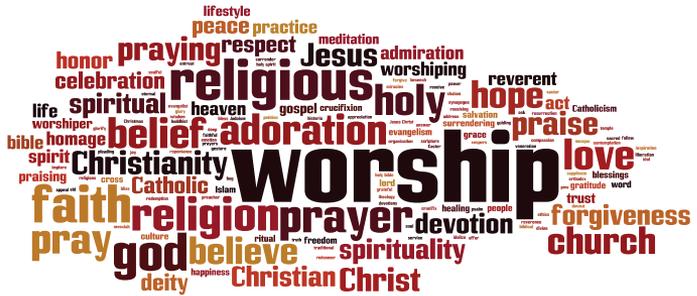
Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. (1 Peter 4:1-4 KJV)

Even religious people ridicule the commitment of their peers who faithfully attend all of the appointed Bible classes, worship services, Gospel meetings, etc., which are scheduled by the leaders of a local congregation (Hebrews 13:17), under the auspices of Jesus Christ who is Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Furthermore, Christians often more nearly resemble the ungodly world around them than do they transform themselves with the Gospel of the Christ (Romans 12:1-2). Many are the saints who forget to behave ***“as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance”*** (1 Peter 1:14 NKJV). After all, the faithful child of God must ever recall ***“that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God”*** (1 Peter 4:2). Once ***“...having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”*** (2 Peter 1:4), Christians are obliged to ***“...walk as children of light”*** (Ephesians 5:8). Friendship with the carnal world converts Christians into the enemies of God (James 4:4). Christians must be careful to remain ***“unspotted from the world”*** (James 1:27).

Turning back from the noble pursuit as a Christian is not an option

with which one will find eternal satisfaction. *“But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’”* (Luke 9:62). In some significant way, it will be worse to enter into eternity as a fallen child of God than had one never become a Christian in the first place (2 Peter 2:20-22).

It is high time for Christians to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and do the things that He says (Luke 6:46). Christians



need to **act like Christians** even though they most certainly will suffer some form of resistance from the world for being Christ-like (2 Timothy 3:12); if a child of God experiences no opposition or pushback from worldly people, perhaps the world does not know that he or she is a Christian! The apostles refused to be quieted regarding the promotion of Jesus Christ and His church (Acts 5:29), and they suffered the consequences of their faithfulness (Acts 5:40). Being a faithful Christian has in the past even resulted in one’s death for no other reason than for being a child of God, and that remains a real possibility today (Revelation 2:10).

In the time that we may have left before our demise or before the return of our Lord (John 14:1-3), each child of God must wholeheartedly apply himself or herself to practicing Christianity and persuading others with the Gospel (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). Regarding ourselves, may we walk in the light of our Lord and enjoy fellowship with fellow children of God (1 John 1:7). With respect to the unsaved, may we diligently *“walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time”* (Colossians 4:5). Finally, *“whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10). *“We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4 ESV). Dear Christian, practice your religion **religiously!** †



Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Jerry Bates

Jesus warned us against being deceived by supposedly godly ministers who are inwardly nothing but servants of Satan. ***“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”*** (Matthew 7:15). In this passage, we find Jesus cautioning His followers against false teachers. Unfortunately, these false teachers will not always appear to be teaching falsehood. On the outside they appear as good, kind, loving teachers, but inwardly they are like wolves. We would like to think that all teachers would be honest enough to let everyone know of their intentions, but such is not the case. Paul made a similar statement to the Ephesian elders when he met with them as recorded in Acts 20. In verses 29-30 of that chapter, we find these words of warning. ***“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”***

From where would these false teachers come? They would sometimes come from among ourselves, the flock. False teachers do not always come from the outside, but often they arise from within the church. This makes them especially dangerous, because we often trust these men until it is too late. They have already poisoned many with their false teaching and drawn many away from the truth before we realize what is being done. Even after



realizing their teaching to be wrong, many still seek to somehow justify their actions or give them the benefit of the doubt rather than brand them as false teachers. Their lack of action is rationalized by stating that they do not want to be judges of other brethren. However, Jesus said that ***“by their fruits you will know them”*** (Matthew 7:20). We must not be hasty in our judgments; on the other hand, neither do we want to be too late. ***“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them”*** (Romans 16:17). We must actively fight against these wolves in sheep’s clothing.

People often seem surprised that a person could be a false teacher. He appears to be so kind and loving. He gives the impression that he is so sincere in trying to save the lost. His teaching is soft and pleasing. Morally speaking, he seems to be so pure and harmless. Surely a person like this is not a servant of Satan. After all, Satan is mean, a liar and is seeking to destroy us, so we think. Nonetheless, Paul said that we should not be surprised at this. ***“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into***

apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). In other words, even while Satan is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44), he does not appear to be. Similarly, his servants appear to be harmless but inwardly they are ravening wolves. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing.

What are some characteristics of these wolves in sheep’s clothing? They often appeal to Scripture. As some have said, they have just enough Scripture to make it appear that their teaching is true; however, they misuse, misapply or overlook other key Scriptures. Satan appealed to Scripture to tempt Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple (Matthew 4:5-7).

False teachers often seek to fellowship with denominational preachers, claiming that we are all seeking to serve the same God. However, John encouraged us to have no fellowship with any who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, because if we greet him or receive him into our houses, we share in his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Just as Satan denied God’s Word to Eve in the Garden of Eden, false teachers sometimes deny God’s Word. Most religious teachers boldly declare we are saved by faith alone, even though the Bible clearly affirms that people are not justified by faith alone (James 2:24).

Satan pretended to be wise to Eve and lured her with the promise of wisdom like God (Genesis 3:4-5). Likewise, many false teachers masquerade as the wise and educated ones, yet they deny the authority of God’s Word. They praise God for His love and kindness and confidently declare that due to His love, God will not actually punish anyone in hell. Yet, the Bible plainly warns us against the fires of hell (e.g., Matthew 15:46; Luke 12:5). Numerous teachers appear to deeply love the souls of men, speaking good pleasing things, but in actuality, they are seeking riches (Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:3).

Do not be misled or deceived by abundant false teachers. Seldom do they appear evil. Like Satan, they give the impression of being true servants of GOD, yet they are really wolves in sheep’s clothing. Remember the words of Jesus. ***“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves”*** (Matthew 10:16). 



Where Was God?

Byron Nichols

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could wake up and discover that all of the horrendous and wicked things going on in our world were just an awful nightmare and not a reality? Oh, if only that could be so!

It is almost beyond our ability to comprehend the severity and numbers of the massacres and horrors, and to know that these are not confined to one location, or even one nation. It is unnerving to know that such terror and lack of concern for totally blameless victims has become a reality in so many places. Hardly a day goes by without more killing of pure and innocent little children as well as adults who have done absolutely nothing to deserve what is happening to them.

Where Was God?

There is yet another major tragedy involved in the more obvious tragedy that needs our attention. In such times as this there are always many who raise the question, “**Where was God in all of this?** I thought God was supposed to be everywhere, ‘omnipresent.’”

It is not uncommon to hear some ask, “How could God allow something like this to happen? How could a loving God let this occur?” Such questions deserve an answer, and the Bible has the answer.

God is omnipresent, He is everywhere at the same time, and He was there when each terrible event occurred. Jeremiah 23:23-24 tells us, “*‘Am I a God near at hand,’ says the Lord, ‘and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?’ says the Lord; ‘Do I not fill heaven & earth?’ says the Lord.*”

Oh yes, God was there, but His presence doesn't insure His immediate action. The fact that God did not keep the tragedy from happening does not mean that He was powerless to do anything about it, nor does it mean that He didn't care what happened.

By the way, God was there on that blackest Friday and watched as wicked men crucified His Son, too. He cared very deeply about what happened, and He certainly had the power to stop it from happening, but He had an eternal plan that was far more important.

In Matthew 5:45, Jesus said that *“God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* For whatever reasons, God has never prevented all evil from happening, plus He has not always administered immediate punishment on the wicked.

The Lord has never promised that life would be free from tragedies and tribulations. We have all been created with a free will, which brings a lot of our troubles on ourselves. With these facts in mind, how can we justify requiring God to explain His actions or lack of actions to mankind?

Don't be fooled—justice will be carried out. Romans 12:19 affirms, *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.* God will deal accordingly as He deems best.

Many times in the Bible, justice was administered quickly, as with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11, and many other times justice was delayed (but not ignored). In spite of it all, we can still trust God.

First Corinthians 1 and other Scriptures stress the great superiority of God's wisdom over that of men. Blaming God for any atrocious incident helps to prove how incapable mankind is in trying to match our wisdom and perspective with that of the Creator of the universe. God doesn't use the same calendar that we use. When He decides the time is right, He will most definitely exercise judgment on all. We read in Ecclesiastes 12:14, *“...God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”*

Could Any Possible GOOD Come from These Tragic Events?

The answer is—yes indeed. God is hearing a greatly increased number of people all over the world who have finally resorted to praying fer-

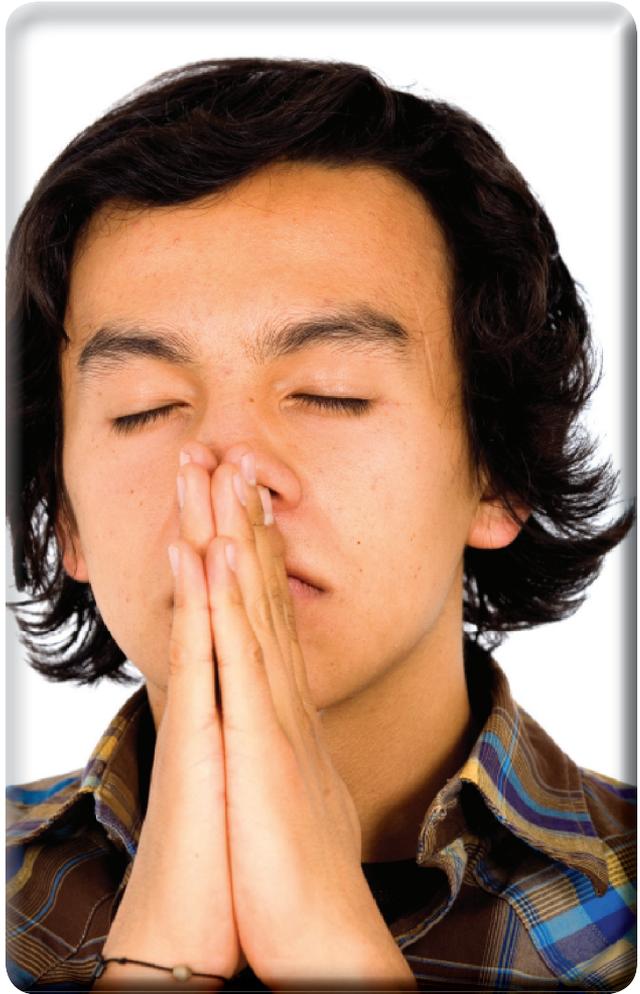
vently regarding all of this devastation. He is causing many to try to do what they can to bring comfort to victims that they don't even know and will never know.

Surely, there is agreement that the character of America and other countries has deteriorated drastically over the past several years. America used to be admired by much of the rest of the world and looked up to because of our goodness—but not so now.

With this in mind, I have two questions for your consideration: (1)

Could it be that God is perhaps allowing our nation and others to reassess our values and priorities? (2) Is He maybe giving us an opportunity to renew our commitment to those things that are much more than mere **things**, but are the basic principles that enable any nation to become and remain great, not in our own eyes, but in the eyes of God?

Think on these things.





1932—2008

Who Is God?

J.C. Choate

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...” (Genesis 1:1). *“And God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image.’ In the image of God created He him, male and female created He them...”* (Genesis 2:26).

Humans were created to be the object of God’s love. We were given immortal souls so that our relationship with God could be neverending. We were made with the ability to think, to choose, to love and to respond to love. From the creation, humans were perfect. They had no sin. Their relationship with God was personal. God walked and talked with them. In that relationship, God was fully revealed so that humans knew Him for the reality that He is.

Sin Became a Barrier

Why do we not see God today? Why does He not come and talk personally to us? Why is there a distance between humans and God? If God is real, why doesn’t He simply show Himself to us or speak to us in an overwhelming voice from heaven so that we **know** Who He is? Wouldn’t it be better if we **knew** rather than to be limited to *searching* for God, and then to living in *faith* that we have found Him?

Yes, we reason as humans, “There is so much confusion about God in this world. Why doesn’t He just **show** Himself to us, so that we have no choice but to shout, ‘Yes, you are God!’”

The answer lies in the way we were made. God wants our love, but He wants us to *choose* Him, to obey Him because we *want* to, rather than

because we have been so *overwhelmed* by Him that we have no choice.

If we could see God with these human eyes, if we could hear Him with these human ears, our freedom to choose Him would be totally overwhelmed. We would fall on our faces before Him, not because of our love or desire to please Him, but simply because we could not help ourselves. Romans 14:11 says **“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”**

God has revealed Himself through His creation and through His image embedded in the human soul and consciousness. In ages past, He has spoken directly and through angelic beings, as well as through specially chosen men (Hebrews 1:1-3), revealing Himself and His desires to humans. God’s promise is that if we seek Him, we will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29).



However, often in his history, man has not made an honest search for God. Instead, he has “created” his own gods, fashioning them after himself. Zeus, the king of the Greek gods, is typical: “Zeus is King of the Gods of Mount Olympus, fights with his wife Hera, and drops down to earth in a variety of disguises to seduce maidens who catch his fancy.”

What were these “gods”? Simply, they were man magnifying humans and giving them enlarged powers as well as super-human greeds, vengeance and faults. Every trait that humans saw within themselves was given in super-sized measure to these gods of their imagination.

Another type of “god” has also been developed by humans. Men who were great spiritual leaders have often been raised to the status of “god” after their deaths. “Holy men,” in various religions and with the passing of time, came to be revered, worshiped, the object of prayer and sacrifice—“God,” in the minds of their followers.

Yet, the true God is not the result of man’s imagination. We cannot **create** Him. There is a vacuum within our souls, but it must be filled by *the true God* Who is outside of man and greater than all else in existence. The vacuum cannot be filled by a creation of our own minds whom we have endowed with “god-hood.”

So, beginning with the emptiness and the longing within us to know God, we look for God’s revelation of Himself. To settle for “gods” that humans have imagined, or to raise some respected spiritual leader to the status of being god, would be disastrous for our souls.

We can see many of God’s attributes revealed in His work of creation. He has power beyond human comprehension. His knowledge and intelligence are without measure. He is a God of design and order. Everything He has made operates according to a dependable and predictable **law**. In some cases, humans have studied deeply enough to discover and define some of those laws. An example is the law of cause-and-effect [that there is a sufficient cause behind everything that exists and happens]. The First Law of Thermodynamics says that energy may change form, but that no new energy can be made. The Second Law of Thermodynamics says that the “clock” is winding down, that usable energy is moving toward being “used up.” To these and all other “laws” of nature, both known and unknown by man, there are no exceptions. God’s creation runs according to His design, according to laws that do not change.

The law of gravity is not understood by scientists, but the belief is that it is the gravitational pull of the bodies of matter against each other that causes the planets, moons and stars to remain as they are in relation to each other. What would happen if God removed His power behind the law

of gravity? Would everything fly apart into the endlessness of space? Or, would everything fall in on everything else? Regardless, the effect would be total destruction of our world and the universe. In a very real sense, it is the power of God that holds all of creation in its proper place so that things can go on in a *normal* way. Hebrews 1:1-3 declares that God, through His Son, created all things, and that He is **“upholding all things by the word of His power.”**

God spoke, and all that exists came into being. He revealed in His Word, centuries before it was known by man, that **“He hangs the earth on nothing”** (Job 26:7). It is this God, this Being of intelligence and power, Who is revealed in *His creation* and *in the pages of the Bible*.

Reading the books of religions practiced today, we see myths and statements that are contrary to the laws by which nature operates. The God of the Bible is not explained by mythological stories or by statements that are in conflict with the known scientific laws. He says of Himself, **“The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down ...Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge... Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”** (Psalm 50).

“I am the Lord your God” (Exodus 20:1-7). 

J.C. Choate, preacher of the Gospel for more than 60 years, began publication of *The Voice of Truth International* in 1994.

Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done,

Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel from a far country.

Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it (Isaiah 46:9-11).

Priceless

Andrew Lankford

*It's so easy to feel good when things are calm and peaceful,
when birds are singing, when the sun is rich and warm.*

*But when things are not so calm and peaceful,
when fear and doubt and loneliness fall like flames,
it's not so easy to feel good.*

*One thing is for certain, however,
even in the midst of a dark and stormy night,
Christ died for us! That will never change.
As long as we live and breathe that will never change.*

*No matter what we are facing, no
matter how difficult things become,
Christ loved us so much he died for us.
That great sacrifice makes us priceless in the eyes
of a God so strong He created the universe
with the sound of His voice, a God
so intelligent He composed the greatest
love story ever told, a God so limitless
He knows the end from the beginning.
We are indeed priceless, even when
we may not feel like it, even when
we believe all hope is lost.*

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What Christ Meant to Paul

Terry G. Jones

In the epistles of the apostle Paul, there are constant references to the idea of being *“in Christ.”* Being *“in Christ”* involves one being influenced by Christ, being obedient to the Gospel of Christ and being added to the body of Christ where one walks in the footsteps of Christ and lives in hope of eternal life with Christ.

Paul would have us to know that Christ had influenced every aspect of his life. Nowhere is this more evident than when he wrote, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). In this verse, we learn what Christ really meant to Paul.

First, Paul was **crucified with Christ**. He had not experienced physical death on a cross. However, Paul could identify with Christ’s death. (1) He had become dead to the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:19) in that it no longer had control over him. (2) He had died to the flesh. *“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Galatians 5:24). (3) He had died to the world. *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”* (Galatians 6:14).

Second, Paul was **changed by Christ**. He said, *“nevertheless I live; yet not I...”* Though crucified, he still lived. Then, notice the phrase, *“yet not I.”* Here Paul pointed to the change that had taken place in his life and the influence that Christ now had over him. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul declared, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* When Paul met Jesus, his life was completely and forever changed. Here is a life that went from *“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”* (Acts 9:4) to *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Third, Paul was **controlled by Christ**. He said, *“but Christ liveth in*

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me.” It was Paul’s life but Christ was at the controls. He allowed every aspect of his life to be directed by the Lord. In Colossians 3, Paul detailed how completely Christ controlled his life. (1) Christ controlled his mind. *“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”* (v. 2). (2) Christ controlled his members. *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (v. 5). (3) Christ controlled his morals. *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering...”* (vs. 12-14). (4) Christ controlled his manners. *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”* (vs. 15-17).

Fourth, Paul was **committed to Christ**. He said, *“And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.”* Paul referred to his present life which he was *“now”* living as a Christian as opposed to his old life before his conversion. Not only was he saved by faith (Galatians 2:16), but he lived by faith in the Son of God. In Philippians 1:21, he declared, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Every aspect of Paul’s life was rooted in Christ.

Fifth, Paul was **claimed by Christ**. He said that Christ, *“loved me, and gave himself for me.”* Paul’s life was motivated by the love of Christ that was demonstrated by His vicarious death. Like all men, Paul was lost in sin, but Christ died that He might claim him for His own. *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:27-29). To Timothy Paul said, *“That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am now chief”* (1 Timothy 1:15).

By His death, Christ has claimed us for His own. **Like Paul, we must allow Christ to influence every aspect of our lives.** ☩

Terry G. Jones is a Gospel preacher and an instructor at the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA.

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“His Hour Had Not Yet Come”

Royce Frederick

Great crowds followed Jesus as He went about teaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every kind of sickness. He taught them with authority, and the common people heard Him gladly (Matthew 5:23-25; 7:29; Mark 12:37).

However, not everyone was happy with the works and words of Jesus. Some even wanted to kill Him (John 5:16-18; 7:1; 11:53; Luke 22:2).

Jesus returned to Nazareth, His hometown, and preached there. *“So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way”* (Luke 4:28-30). It was not yet time for Him to die.

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In Jerusalem, after He had taught in the Temple, “...*they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come*” (John 7:30).

On one occasion, the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Jesus. They found Him teaching the people. However, the officers were so amazed by Jesus, “*Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’ The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’*” (John 7:45-46).

Again, in Jerusalem, “*These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come*” (John 8:20).

Later, we see that “...*they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by*” (John 8:59; see 10:31). Not one stone left their hands. It was not yet time for Him to die.

Yet, when the time came for Him to die, Jesus gave His life willingly. “*Therefore, My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father*” (John 10:17-18).

Even when they were arresting Him in the Garden, Jesus could have called for a mighty army of angels to rescue Him (Matthew 26:52-54), but He did not. When the time came for Him to die for our sins, Jesus freely gave His life for you and for me. †

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



Kenney's Pennies

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NKJV). I have heard it said that the hardest words in the English language are “I was wrong” or “I have sinned.” I’m not sure if these are the hardest or not, but they do seem to be rather scarce at times.

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A Trio of Truths

Bill Dillon

The apostle of love emphatically set forth three great facts about God. This trio of truths did not come by repeated rumor nor by recorded tradition nor by the voice of hearsay.

1. ***“God is light”*** (1 John 1:5). In a world of fleeting shadows, we are reminded of the radiance of God. In a world where the darkness of sin is so prevalent, it is good to know of the light that banishes the night. So eminent is the brightness of God that ***“in him is no darkness at all.”***

2. ***“God is life.”*** This truth is happily received in a world that is in the icy grip of gloom. Every trip to the cemetery should be made under the umbrella of this hope-bringing declaration. Notice how John elaborated on this truth: ***“And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life”*** (1 John 2:25). ***“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”*** (1 John 5:11). What a triumphant message!

3. ***“God is love”*** (1 John 4:8). This precept touches us in everyday living: ***“He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”*** (1 John 4:20). Again, ***“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”*** (1 John 3:17).

What is the purpose of giving these triumphant truths? John said in his own words, ***“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).

These grand sentences comprise the anthem of John’s life and ministry. More is here than meets the eye. We, too, should speak these truths to men and let them be the music of our souls. 

Bill Dillon preaches for the Lord’s church in Cotter, Arkansas, USA.

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Our God Is Our Shield

From the Psalms; compiled by Betty Burton Choate

“...Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.

They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat.

Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them” (Psalm 115:3-8).

“[Our God] heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. The Lord lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground” (Psalm 147:3-6).

“How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You” (Psalm 139:17,18).

“Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, ‘There is no help for him in God.’ Selah

But **You, O Lord, are a shield for me**, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. Selah

I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around” (Psalm 3:1-6).

“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is

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broken. Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned” (Psalm 34:15-22).

“I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live” (Psalm 116:1-2).

“The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works” (Psalm 33:13-15).

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in You” (Psalm 33:18-22).

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15).

How beautifully these verses reassure every faithful Christian of God’s continual watchful care. We are told that His eyes are always upon us, and that His ears are always open to our cries.

If we believe in Him, we must be on guard against the doubts Satan would raise in our hearts, questioning how the Almighty Elohim, the Creator of the Universe, could bother Himself with the continual awareness of the activities and the needs of something so infinitesimally small as I! Because He knows Satan’s ploy to create doubts and to destroy our faith, God repeatedly says in plain words that nothing and no one is too small or unimportant to have His attention. As Jesus said, God is aware of every sparrow that falls, and we are of much more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31)! 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate.

Note: In order to make paragraphs of the verses, punctuation and capitalization have been changed from the printing in the NKJV.

Origin of Man and the Universe: How?

Tim Childs

The first Bible book has been properly named “Genesis,” a word that means “birth” or “origin.” The origin of man and of the universe has been a battleground between faith and unbelief for centuries. The end of this battle is nowhere in sight.

God has no problem with questioning and investigation. God has no problem with true science. As such, science has been a blessing to humanity by improving the quality and length of life.

With the exception of the origin of species, in no area has science been satisfied with providing nothing more than educated guesses, as scientists might call them. In no other matter do some scientists and some in the circle of higher learning dogmatically scream louder over so little data (external to the Bible). Here is an area where scientists have no real-time evidence to examine, test or measure. Yet, they are certain their conclusions are infallible, and they think you are ignorant if you do not accept them.

In any other study, their credibility would be called into question, and they would be dismissed from their laboratories for approaching a problem with an agenda, for their lack of objectivity and for their negligence of breaking scientific rules otherwise demanded in their community. They accuse creationists of starting out with preconceived ideas. Go figure. No, we start with Genesis Chapter 1.

True scientists are known for their careful approach to a question. They study, measure, examine, re-examine and search for every angle possible for what could give a false test result. After testing and scrutiny of a hypothesis, only then is a possible solution formed. Following the

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formation of the hypothesis, greater study, examination, measuring and experimenting is done. If it passes that hurdle, it becomes a theory. Following the formation of the theory, rigorous testing again is done over time to determine whether it passes the test to become recognized as fact.

The truth of the matter is that science is ill equipped to give humanity an explanation for the origin of man and of the universe. No testing relative to the real issue can be done. Science has no way of testing the beginning of the universe. Science is impotent to recreate the phenomenon that occurred at a point in time when there was nothing to examine, nothing to measure and nothing to see, smell, touch or taste. Science is not a god. Even science has its limitations.

Basil Overton, an educator at Heritage Christian University, used to say that it takes greater faith to believe that man and the universe came from nothing, than the faith necessary simply to accept what God reveals about creation. There are equally highly educated scientists who believe in creation.

The Holy Bible says, ***“In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth”*** (Genesis 1:1). Here we have all the necessary components needed: time, mind, force, space and matter. A few millennia later still it was proclaimed, ***“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard”*** (Psalm 19:1-3). Without a measurable speck of reservation, with David we mightily join in the chorus, ***“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...”*** (Psalm 139:14).

How terribly, terribly sad it is that millions of men and women finally have had to take a step into eternity to be able to see God to see what their biased, blinded eyes would not allow them to see when they were alive and had the opportunity to submit themselves to the Ruler of the universe. Why not remove Satan’s blinders before you are the next to take the same fatal step? Incidentally, there is no measurable danger in believing, trusting and obeying God! 

Tim Childs preaches for the Warner Robins Church of Christ in Warner Robins, Georgia, USA.

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The Fool Says God Does Not Exist

Rebecca Rushmore

As a teacher for many years, I think I am beyond being surprised at the places evolution shows up in the school setting. Just a few weeks ago, I pulled out an English worksheet on adjectives, only to find each sentence made a reference to dinosaurs that lived “millions of years ago.” References to evolution appear in almost every textbook I use with my sixth grade class. At the heart of the idea of evolution is the concept that God does not exist.

Psalms 14:1 and 53:1 both begin with, “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*” The original Hebrew word “fool” in these verses means stupid, wicked, impious or a vile person (*Strong’s*). These verses are not describing the person who loudly proclaims to the world with his words that he does not believe God exists. Notice, this person makes that claim in his heart. Jesus condemned the Pharisees in Matthew 15:18-19 for what was in their hearts. The word “heart” in these contexts refers to man’s mind or thoughts. Our outward actions begin with our inward thoughts.

Those who reflect in the privacy of their own thoughts that God does not exist begin to show these thoughts in their actions. Consider the man described in Psalms 49:10 and 92:6. The man in these verses does not believe that God exists or that there is an eternal reward or punishment. The goal of this individual is to gather wealth on this earth, forgetting that he cannot take it with him (cf., Luke 12:16-21). This fool takes no thought for the wonderful world that God created and the blessings man receives at God’s hand.

Paul wrote to the church at Rome that the Gentiles had no excuse not to know God existed; looking at the natural world around them provided enough evidence (Romans 1:18-23). The word “fool” in this New Testament passage means “to become insipid,” “to make as a simpleton” or “to make foolish.” (*Strong’s*). Others show they do not believe in God by their failure to follow God’s commands; Jesus said if we love Him, we

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will obey Him (John 14:15; 15:10). We cannot love someone in whom we do not believe. Still others show they do not believe God is real when they do not share the Gospel message as commanded (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). Again, the foolish man acts like God does not exist or does not have a plan for his life.

God does exist; the honest individual will acknowledge the overwhelming evidence that points to this fact. Many in the world today do not verbally dispute this fact; however, many, by their actions, show they truly do not believe there is a God. Proverbs 1:7 states, ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instructions.”*** Proverbs 12:15 reads, ***“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”*** Those who choose to live their lives according to their own wants and desires say by their actions that they believe God does not exist.

Jesus compared those who hear the truth of the Gospel but who choose not to obey it to a foolish man who builds his house on a foundation of sand (Matthew 7:26). We have been given the truth (John 8:32; 17:17) and everything we need to live godly lives (2 Peter 1:3). The wise will follow God’s Word and have the reward of Heaven. The foolish will ignore God and do as they please, leading to eternity in Hell (Matthew 25:46). What do you show by your actions? Are you wise or foolish? †



Rebecca Rushmore is a Staff Writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and school-teacher. She resides in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.



Just One Book

Bobby Dockery

When Sir Walter Scott, the great Scottish author and poet, was dying, he asked his son-in-law John Lockhart to bring “the book” and read to him. Sir Walter possessed one of the great private libraries of the Nineteenth Century, numbering thousands of volumes. With some uncertainty Lockhart inquired, “What book?” “What book?” cried Sir Walter, “there is but one Book—the Bible!”

It is certainly true that the Bible is a Book unlike any other! So many of the world’s problems would shrink to manageable size if only people would really attempt to make the Bible their basis for life and conduct. In so many of life’s distressing, perplexing situations there is just one book that can really help us!

Just One Book on Which to Base a Life

Supermarket racks and bookstores are filled with thousands

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of volumes that claim to teach us how to live richer, fuller, more meaningful lives. Everything is available—from celebrity health and beauty guides to manuals for business success and wealth, to quick-fix, self-help volumes! Yet, there is only one Book that gives directions on living from the Maker and Sustainer of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). **Many modern authors have a gimmick, but God has the Answer!**

Just One Book on Which to Build a Faith

The religious world is full of books: Creeds, Articles of Faith, Books of Discipline, Standard Manuals, etc. The result has been religious division! People are trying to base their practice of Christianity on what they read in their own books instead of what they read in God's Book. **The Bible was given as the only creed, blueprint, and rule of faith for the church.** We are urged to do *“all things according to the pattern”* (Hebrews 8:5). We must speak as the Bible speaks (1 Peter 4:11). Division would give way to unity if only men were content to take just one Book.

Just One Book on Which to Stake a Soul

There is only one book on the face of the earth that will still be there in the Day of Judgment (Matthew 24:35; John 12:48). When the books are opened at the Last Day, we will be judged on the basis of how well we have lived the things that are written in the Word of God (Revelation 20:12-13). Then the question will be, “Have you obeyed the one Book (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)?

Someone has written:

**There's just one Book for life's gladness,
One book for the toilsome days;
One Book that can cure life's madness;
One Book that can voice life's praise.
There's just one Book!**



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

The New Testament: A Pattern for Our Day?

Dalton Key

“Does New Testament teaching constitute a pattern for today’s church?”

There is no doubt the first century church was expected to adhere to the pattern of inspired teaching. Paul instructed the Colossian brethren, *“and whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”* (Colossians 3:17). He reminded the Corinthians, *“the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 14:37a).

The church at Thessalonica was warned, *“And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed”* (2 Thessalonians 3:14). Peter wrote, *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God”* (1 Peter 4:11). John, the “apostle of love,” nevertheless demanded total subjection to New Testament doctrine: *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son”* (2 John 9).

Moreover, early congregations of the Lord’s church were all expected to follow the same rule and submit to the same inspired teaching in fundamental areas such as **salvation from sin** (Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12-13; Galatians 3:27), **morality** (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-9), **family matters** (Colossians 3:18-21; Ephesians 5:22-6:4) and **Christian worship** (Hebrews

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10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29; 16:2; Acts 20:7). The Colossians were instructed, *“Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea”* (Colossians 4:16).

However, that was long ago. What about the church today? Our original question lingers still:

“Does New Testament teaching constitute a pattern for today’s church?”

The answer comes from Jude, an inspired writer and brother to our Lord. He exhorted his Christian readers to *“contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). Notice that *“the faith,”* that body of truth governing and enlightening God’s children centuries ago, “the sum of that which Christians believe” (Delbert R. Rose), “that alone which is contained in the Bible” (James Macknight), has been *“once for all delivered.”* It has been delivered once; hence, we need look for no additional revelations of divine truth.

Since it has been delivered *“for all”* or “for all time; it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superseded, amended or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, complete and inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine” (Guy Woods).

The answer? “Yes!”



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

Did You Know? The Hebrew word ‘arek (aw-rake’) is translated as longsuffering, patient, slow to anger. Four times it is translated as longsuffering in reference to God waiting for man to obey (Exodus 34:6). One time the word is translated as patient, referring to waiting instead of being impatient (Ecclesiastes 7:8). Nine times the word is translated as slow to anger. God is slow to anger, and we should be too (Psalm 103:8; Proverbs 14:29).

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How to Preach the Bible

Charles R. Rose

James gave sound advice when he said, *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment”* (James 3:1). It is an awesome responsibility that one undertakes when he accepts the role of Bible teacher or preacher. The souls of each person in his listening audience are placed under his personal care. What advice should one offer to a young man who is planning such an endeavor? The following is my advice to him.

Preach the Whole Counsel of God (Acts 20:27)

This is the one and only way a person may be certain of doing God’s will. Paul could say with all confidence, *“I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you”* (Acts 20:20 KJV). Even though some subjects are difficult to say the least, still they must be taught. To withhold biblical information for fear that someone might be offended is to fail to *“make full proof of thy ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:5). Reproving and rebuking are just as important, when needed, as is exhortation (2 Timothy 4:2).

Preach the Truth in Love of the Truth (Ephesians 4:15)

The way one speaks will determine the reception of the audience. To speak in an unloving manner is totally uncalled for, and it seldom helps the listeners to *“grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”* (Ephesians 4:15). As one preacher explained it, “We have three ‘isms’ in

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the brotherhood. Liberal-ism, Anti-ism and Ugly-ism. Liberalism looses where God has not loosed. Antism binds where God has not bound. Ugly-ism teaches the truth, but in such an ugly manner that the audience will not listen.” One can *“earnestly contend for the faith”* (Jude 3) without being unnecessarily antagonistic.

Speak Boldly (Ephesians 6:18-19)

Even the incomparable apostle Paul felt a deep need for the church family to be praying that he have the boldness necessary to speak as a preacher of the Gospel ought to speak (Ephesians 6:20).

Be Adaptable

By this I mean, learn the skill of adapting the lesson to the needs of your audience. Paul explained, *“to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all things save some”* (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). Paul did not compromise God’s truth, but rather he adapted his actions and speech to his audience. Thus, preachers today should speak the language of their audiences. Speak on their level, using their vocabulary. Some preachers seem to try to **show off their education** by using language that only a university professor will understand. Speak the language of the common man because the great majority of the audience is made up of common people.

Give Attention to Reading (1 Timothy 4:13)

First and foremost, read the Bible! Constantly! Surround yourself with good, biblically sound books and read, and **preach the Word!** †

Charles R. Rose is the preacher for the Lord’s church in Lincoln, Missouri, USA.

Women of Excellence, Arise

Joslyn Ramsubhag

Women of excellence, arise!
God's Word will make you wise
Quickly check through your life
To a new horizon you must strive.

As the rising sun radiates the sky
Your humble life will attract passersby
'Lay off weights which keep you down
Remember Satan only entices wrong.

Women of excellence like the rising sun
Radiating light could be lots of fun
Your portrayal of Christ for all to see
In darkness, in light, shines continuously.

Women of excellence, thou excel all!
You slip...you stumble...you never fall
As beacons beams at troubled seas
You arise like the sun for all to see.

Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-40

Jerry Bates

1. Is circumcision still required to be pleasing to God? (7:19)
2. What really matters to God? (7:19)
3. God expects us to remain in whatever state in which we are born and never try to change it. True False (7:20-22)
4. “You were bought at a _____.” (7:24)
5. Why does Paul advise that people remain unmarried? (7:26)
6. Did Paul recommend that those who are married divorce each other? (7:27)
7. Would it have been wrong in Paul’s time to be married? (7:28)
8. What did Paul say would happen to those who were married in his time? (7:28)
9. For what do the unmarried care? (7:32)
10. For what do those who are married care? (7:33)
11. What does Paul really desire that Christians should do? (7:35)
12. Was it a sin to be married? (7:36)
13. How long is the wife bound to her husband? (7:39)
14. What happens when her husband dies? (7:39)
15. According to Paul’s judgment, what should the widow do? (7:40)

(See the back cover for answers)

VERSE SEARCH

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. 18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. 20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. 22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

25 Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, 30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, 31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. 33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. 34 There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. 35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

36 But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry. 37 Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well. 38 So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.

39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. 40 But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

SALVATION



Is There Only One Right Way to Be Baptized?

Danny Boggs

Is there only one right way to be baptized? Yes. The action is evident in accounts of baptism (Matthew 3:1-6, 13-16; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39); the deed is found in accurate definition; and the proper practice paints a profound picture (Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:12). The one baptism (Ephesians 4:5) of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16) is immersion in water.

While today “baptism” is primarily a religious word sometimes used for non-religious purposes, in the first century the opposite was true. Greek words like **bapto**, **baptizein** and **baptisma** were common words pressed into religious service.

When the twelve wanted to know which of them would betray Jesus, He answered, “*He who has dipped [embapsas] his hand in the dish with me will betray me*” (Matthew 26:23). **Embapsas** is a form of **embapto**, which is based on the root **bapto**. The action is dipping. Judas certainly could not have sprinkled or poured his hand in the dish.

SALVATION

When Jesus told of the present states of two men who had passed from this life, he said that the rich man ***“called out, ‘Father Abraham, send Lazarus to dip (embapse) the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame”*** (Luke 16:24). While the rich man would have taken the water any way he could have gotten it, the words he used can only mean one thing—he wanted Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water, not “sprinkle the end of his finger in water” or “pour the end of his finger in water.”

When James and John asked to sit on either side of Jesus in his glory, ***“Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’ And they said to him, ‘We are able.’ And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you will drink and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized...”*** (Mark 10:38-39). This was not Jesus’ baptism in water. He had already been baptized that way by John (Mark 1:9-11). These two disciples surely had already been baptized in water, too, since they were baptizing others (John 4:1-2). Jesus was being baptized at that moment. His anguish had commenced as He headed toward Jerusalem and the cross. Only days later, Jesus was greatly distressed and troubled. He told the same men, ***“My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death”*** (Mark 14:33-34). The next day, for the joy that was set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despising its shame. Only after that experience did Jesus sit down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). James and John did not know what they were asking. Jesus wasn’t sprinkled with distress. He didn’t have a little suffering poured on him. He was overwhelmed, immersed in sorrow and suffering. The highest honor would only follow such deep affliction.

Thus, the rejection of immersion alone as baptism rests not on the meaning of the word but on unworthy human motives. Through His apostles, Jesus commanded, ***“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”*** (Acts 2:38). If we love Him, we will obey what He commands (John 14:15). 

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



Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

BIBLE PRAYERS

Across

3 Prayed at midnight.

Acts 16:25

4 Pray without _____.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

7 Prayed "O great and awesome God."

Nehemiah 1:4

10 Prayed at midnight

Acts 16:25

12 Matthew 6:8-13 is

known as the _____ prayer.

13 Who is our Mediator when we pray to God? 1

Timothy 2:5

14 Who came to Saul when he was praying? Acts 9:10-19

Down

1 Eli thought she was drunk when praying. 1 Samuel 1:13

2 He prayed three times daily. Daniel 6:10

5 Garden where Jesus prayed three times. Matthew 26:36

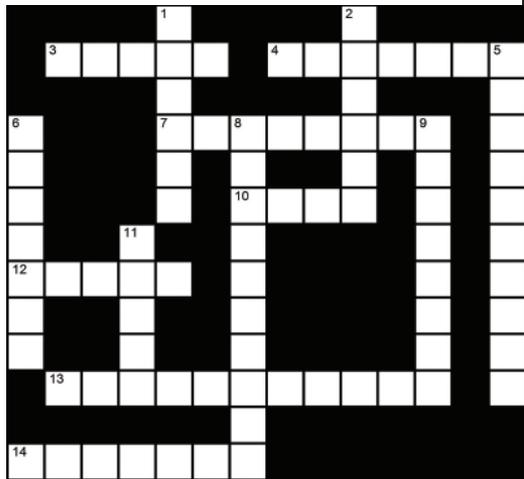
6 Who was praying in 2 Chronicles 7:1?

8 We are not to pray as whom? Matthew 6:4

9 Who prayed with vain repetitions? Matthew 6:7

11 He prayed and was in a trance. Acts 11:5

(See the inside back cover for the puzzle solution.)



THE CHURCH

This
Is
The
Church
of
God's Choice

Attend The
Church
Of Your Choice?

The
Church of Christ
Romans 16:16

Christ's Choice

Dean Fugett

We often hear that one should “go to the church of your choice.” When the general public is urged to be religious, it is to choose a church and be a part of it. Certainly, we have the right to choose. Everyone does. There is no shortage of churches from which to choose. Further, there is no limit to what some of them will do and are doing to attract our attention. Almost every advertisement seems to point to “party-time.” However, there still remains a thought in the back of our minds about this choosing thing. Is there a right and a wrong choice? Is the church of our choice necessarily Christ’s choice? Does what Jesus wants have any part in our decision making?

Many people seem to choose a church much as one would choose a new car—color, make, model, options—what pleases them. When I talk to

THE CHURCH

people about choosing a church, I hear them saying that they are looking for a church that “fits” them. What about God? Does His Word, the Bible, ever come into play in this choosing thing? Denominations seem to just make the “church” over into whatever the majority want. In fact, some of the larger denominations became larger by first polling the populace to see what they wanted in a church, and then giving it to them. That may work in the realm of pleasing men, but I have a sneaky suspicion that it will not fly in the spiritual realm of pleasing God.

The Bible says the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18, 24). It also says that there is only **one** body (Ephesians 4:4-5; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12). Read it for yourself. If the church is the body, and there is only one body, it follows that there is only one church that belongs to Christ. We may deny this personally, but that doesn’t change the Bible. We may get quite angry at this thought, but it is still true. Read it again! We may never be a part of that one body, but this will not change the truth that there is **one** body (church)!

Some have grown quite infatuated with the “community church” concept. Their claim to “nondenominational” Christianity just means that there is no emphasis placed on doctrine. Whatever doctrine **you** like, just bring it right in with you. Community churches do not stand for any doctrine unless it is that they don’t stand for any doctrine! Anything goes! Dynamic doses of entertainment!

It is the better part of wisdom that we be very careful in our choosing. Jesus said that every plant His Father did not plant shall be rooted up. That means every church other than the one Jesus established shall be rooted up! We will continue to stand for the right of everyone to choose, but one may choose to drink poison instead of milk. He may choose to seek medication or resolve to die! He may even choose heaven or hell! That latter choice will be determined, in part, by his choice of churches.

Make the church of your choice **the church of Christ’s choice**. He died for His church (Acts 20:28). He will save His church (Ephesians 5:23). What satisfaction lies in choosing if our choice is wrong? 

Dean Fugett is a preacher with the church of Christ in Cave City, Arkansas, USA.

THE CHURCH



Please! Encourage the Church!

Jimmy Clark

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). This encouraging statement is set in the context of some sad news that Paul gave these elders from Ephesus. Paul said to them, *“And, indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more”* (Acts 20:25). Once more, *“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves”* (Acts 20:29-30). All the troubling news Paul gave would make one want to tell him to stop giving any more. Such was very disturbing. However, he did speak of them being able to be built up even after his departure from them.

There are times when the church needs to be encouraged as Paul did, even in the midst of some bad news. Consider three conditions where the church needs encouragement.

THE CHURCH

In Times of Secularization and Depravity The Lord God calls his people *“out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (1 Peter 2:9). That calling is a call to holiness. Peter also wrote, *“As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct”* (1 Peter 1:14-15). It is extremely discouraging to the church when those who are supposed to walk in holiness live lives of hypocrisy and worldliness. The church needs to know that not everyone is “going to the dogs.” As dead as the congregation at Sardis was (Revelation 3:1), there were still some in that congregation *“who have not defiled their garments”* (Revelation 3:4). There are still people in the church who have not *“bowed the knee to Baal”* (Romans 11:4). Surely, that should encourage the church.

In Times of Schisms and Division The congregation at Corinth was deeply divided, yet Paul encouraged them. *“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus... God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:4, 9). Later in the book, Paul wrote about the division problem. *“For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you”* (1 Corinthians 11:19). Divisions merely reveal who are of God and who pretend to be of God. While division is not desirable (1 Corinthians 1:10), it is not to be paralyzing to the faithful. To be forewarned is to be forearmed and encouraged.

In Times of Suffering and Death Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, *“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Those who suffer and even come to death have great encouragement in the Gospel. Peter wrote of great consolation in the living hope (1 Peter 1:35) and stated, *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials”* (1 Peter 1:6). The great and precious promises of God are of great encouragement to all who face suffering and death. 

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

A NEW CONCEPT IN FAITH

Richard Mansel

Seems like almost every business that opens up around here touts a “new concept” in whatever service they’re offering. Come on, now! How many “new concepts” can you come up with in dentistry or a beauty shop?

Religion does the same thing. Pastors and leaders who want to attract a following come out with a new plan or vision. Academics who thrive, like the Athenians once did on hearing and publishing something new, throw out new theories as if their salaries depended on it.

We like new clothes, new cars, new gadgets and new years. We can hardly do anything but for somebody throwing out something new. We go for it, like the dog in the movie always seeing a new squirrel.

Brother Roy Davison has a powerful group of websites called *The Old Paths*. (You can start at oldpaths.com.) Some people think that sounds anything but interesting. We want new paths, new stuff, new faith!

Well, here’s a *new* concept in faith for you, one that no one really wants to talk about in our distracted world: ***Faithfulness***.

The same Greek word in the New Testament is translated as faith or faithfulness. Faith, if it is scriptural, turns into faithfulness. It’s even included in Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

Faithfulness means not jumping for the next big wave. It means staying strong in the truth of the Gospel. It means shoving away all the trinkets and temptations of Satan. Faithfulness is steadiness in faith.

God rewards people who are faithful. Hezekiah was recognized as doing “***what the Lord his God considered good and right and faithful***” (2 Chronicles 31:20). The Lord is “***loyal to one who is faithful***” (Psalm 18:25).

Faithfulness is new not because of recent appearance, but because so few practice it! Jesus criticized those religious people of His day for neglecting what is most important. “***Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone***” (Matthew 23:23). It’s just as neglected today as it was back then.

Faithfulness is as old as the Bible and as ancient as the Lord Himself. So,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

let us pursue faithfulness, not new fads or interpretations that come along. *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2). Show people something **new** they’ve probably not seen before. †

Richard Mansel as posted at <http://forthrightpress.com/b/L4>

Whom Are You Following?

Derek Broome

If we were to stop and think for a moment, we would all probably come to the same conclusion that even though there are many terrible things in the world, there are still so many things in this world that we love and cherish. While there is nothing wrong with having things that mean a lot to us and that are special in our lives, it is still possible for these things that we love to be the things that separate us from God.

One of the more difficult conversations I have ever experienced in my life took place in a different country many years ago. A young woman was living with a man that had separated from his wife. This young woman had been living with this man for years. They had a child together. She loved him, but she could not marry him. Legally, he was still married, and in addition, he could not have a scriptural divorce. This woman was on the verge of being converted. There and then, she was faced with a decision that would change her life forever, either to stay with the man or put him away, repent and be baptized.

Today, marriage, divorce and remarriage is a major problem in the world as well as in the body of Christ. According to Matthew 19:8, it is because of the hardness of the hearts of men that divorce was ever permitted by Moses. The Word also tells us plainly that divorce was never part of God’s plan. *“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matthew 19:6).

In Matthew 19:9, Jesus continued the discussion of divorce, teaching that sexual immorality is the only reason one can divorce one’s spouse and marry again. A divorced person that has been put away for sexual immorality cannot remarry, and neither can a person that has been divorced for a reason other than sexual immorality remarry.

The law that Jesus states in Matthew 19 is a law for all of mankind. Things do not just become sinful after a person becomes a Christian. We as human beings are going to be faced with choices in our lives. It is up to us to decide whether we are going to follow the world or follow the commandments of God. †

Derek Broome is the Associate Minister of the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

A Dry Baptism

Paul Holland

The more Bible studies you are in, the more weird ideas you hear. Recently, I was exposed to the concept of “dry baptism.” That was the gentleman’s remark relative to Romans 6. He sat in my office, not intending to study or to defend what he believed. He just wanted to tell me what he believed.

It is a strange behavior to make up your own religion. “Dry baptism” is just that. It is an effort to get around the plain meaning of the text.

John’s baptism was not dry. It was in water (Matthew 3:11). The new birth is not dry. It involves water (John 3:5). Aside from the very unique experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, Jesus did not baptize dryly. He used water (John 3:22-23).

The Ethiopian nobleman did not experience a dry baptism. His involved water (Acts 8:36, 38-39). Cornelius’ baptism for forgiveness was not a dry baptism. It involved water (Acts 10:47).

The baptism by which we are sanctified and cleansed is not a dry baptism. It involves water (Ephesians 5:26). The baptism that accompanies drawing near to God in full assurance of faith and hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience is not a dry baptism. It involves water (Hebrews 10:22). The baptism that **“now”** saves us is not a dry baptism. It involves water (1 Peter 3:20-21).

If one wishes to call “Holy Spirit” baptism dry, then so be it. However, there is now only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), and based on the passages mentioned above, their context and various other passages, Holy Spirit baptism is not that baptism!

The baptism that saves is baptism (immersion) in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). 

Paul Holland works with the Swartz Creek Church of Christ, in Swartz Creek, Michigan, USA. prholland95@gmail.com

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Preaching That “I Bid You”

E. Claude Gardner



Rebellious Jonah, then penitent, was now ready to preach to Nineveh. He was instructed to preach the preaching of God. *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and preach to it the message that I tell you”* (Jonah 3:2 NKJV). This is the New Testament message we must preach in the Christian age.

Initially when God asked the historical (not fictional) prophet to preach against this wicked city of Nineveh, he disobeyed. It is baffling to understand his rebellion to God and then deliberately taking a ship in the very opposite direction. Quickly, a severe sea storm began to threaten the ship and the persons thereon. It was concluded that Jonah would be thrown overboard. When this deed was done, God prepared a big fish (not a whale) to swallow Jonah. After much pain and turmoil, he was penitent, and God caused the fish to vomit him on dry land.

He was now ready to preach God’s message of warning and possible doom. The city of Nineveh, with 120,000 people, was large enough that Jonah had to take a three-day journey in the city to deliver God’s message.

What was the message? *“And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh*

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shall be overthrown!” (3:4). What were the results of his preaching? *“Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it”* (3:10). Let us learn that a clear and direct Gospel message will have powerful results.

Three Facts on Preaching

First, preaching is an absolute command of God. Christ charged, *“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’”* (Mark 16:15). The apostle Paul urged *“before God”* to preach. *“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:1-2). *“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”* (Romans 10:14).

Preaching must be included in the church on the Lord’s Day worship; there must be *“apostles’ doctrine”* (Acts 2:42). Two types of congregations exist today—preaching and preaching replaced by praise. In the latter kind, preaching is disdained, neglected and diluted. Preaching is replaced by personal devotionals, lectures and testimonies on what Jesus has done for them. Praise is included to show “relationships” with Jesus. The church of the New Testament and the true plan of salvation are at the sublevel. So-called “praise” is displacing “preaching,” which is departure. The “old” Bible preaching is stale and non-feeling to many younger persons. Young preachers should study and learn the Word of God. They should not look for weird and “far out” topics, but tell the old, old story of the Word of God.

Second, preaching must be the **Word**. It must not be a human creed written or an oral tradition. A preacher must stand behind the cross and preach Christ. *“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul said there is *“woe”* if he did not preach the Gospel. *“For if I*

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preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). A preacher must not endanger his soul by adding to or subtracting from the Word. *“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”* (Revelation 22:18-19).

It is the duty of the preacher to declare the whole counsel of God as written in the New Testament. They follow Paul who said, *“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27).

Gospel preaching will bring marvelous results as it did in the days of the early church. We observe that Paul and associates preached in Thessalonica, which resulted in many Christians and the start of the church. Luke reported the outcome. *“Then Paul as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas”* (Acts 17:2-4). The Word of God will not return void, as Solomon wrote, *“Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days”* (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Third, preaching the Word promises multiple blessings. It is never a mistake to preach only the Word. The Gospel:

Saves

“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:21-22). *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Judges Us

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Is Truth

“Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

Is Living

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). *“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”* (John 15:3).

Is Powerful

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

Love and Obey the Word

One must “hear” and heed the Word of God, for it produces faith and obedience. *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). One must not be like those who heard John the Baptist but refused to obey the command of God. Today, those who obey the Gospel (Mark 16:16) follow the *“counsel of God.”* *“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him”* (Luke 7:30). Those who reject baptism reject the counsel of God.

A Gospel preacher must preach the preaching of God and expect a bountiful harvest of saved souls (Acts 2:22-47). 

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

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Betty Burton Choate

[Leviticus 2:5,13]

Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" (Matthew 26:17).

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:26-28).

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight (Acts 20:7).

Before His death, our Lord taught His disciples that they were to eat the unleavened bread used in the Passover feast as a memorial to the death of His body in sacrifice for us. This was not the mixing of an Old Testament law with the New Law of Christ; it was a new memorial, but the two elements used to represent the body and blood of our Lord were the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine that were part of the supper on that night.

Surely, in the first century, Christian sisters lovingly made the bread, treasuring the fact that they could provide this vital service for the worship of the church. Today, most congregations use bread baked by Jewish hands, from a box that says "Not for Passover," often weeks or months old, and lacking two of the ingredients *required* for the bread for Passover: **oil** [becomes rancid with age] and **salt**.

Sisters, you could volunteer to provide this bread for our Lord's memorial supper for the congregation with which you worship.

Note from the Editors: This page is informational, not doctrinal.

Suggested recipe for unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper:

1 cup plain flour
3 tbs. olive oil
4 tbs. water
1/4 tsp. salt

Mix ingredients thoroughly, shape into a ball and flatten. Roll in flour, place on a baking sheet sprayed with oil. Use a dough roller to spread to approximately 10" X 14"; score with a knife to make 16 pieces. Bake at 425 degrees until lightly browned. Enough bread for an assembly of 100.

When Opportunity Knocks, Open the Door!

Dale Grissom

Christians sometimes try to excuse our lack of involvement in personal evangelism by claiming we are unable to find prospects for Bible study. Perhaps we are looking in the wrong places, if indeed we are looking at all!

We are surrounded by folks who are willing to study if they are approached in the right way and at the right time. Friends, fellow workers and those who are hurting physically and emotionally make good prospects, as do family members of fellow Christians. Those who visit worship services may very well be searching for the Lord and would welcome an invitation to study. Some have visited the services of the church for years, yet they have never obeyed the Gospel. Has no one ever taken the time to encourage them?

Winning lost souls may be the hardest work you can ever do, but it will certainly be the most rewarding. Just think of it: You can help someone prepare to live with Christ forever in Heaven! There is no more important work than this!

Winning lost souls will also be the most loved work you'll ever do. What a wonderful feeling it is when the one you've taught comes to an understanding of the Gospel plan of salvation, obeys his Lord in baptism and arises to a new life in Christ! So, **when opportunity knocks, be sure to open the door!** 

Dale Grissom (1927-2014) was dedicated to personal evangelism and worked with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Hindering the Gospel

Steve Higginbotham

The story is told of a preacher who once preached in an old-fashioned tent revival. During this revival, a couple of young men decided to harass the preacher, hoping that he would pack up and leave town. So, one night after the preacher had started into his sermon, one of these young men stood up, interrupted the service and yelled out, “Hey preacher! What’s the difference between a preacher and a fool?” Without missing a beat, the preacher responded by saying, “You two come up here and stand beside me a moment and I think the audience can see the difference.”—It wasn’t the preacher who packed up and left.

Of course, while we may get a chuckle out of the story, hindering the Gospel is no laughing matter. While we would never stand up and so rudely attempt to impede the Gospel, we may be guilty of hindering it in other, more subtle ways.

Do you think one is helping the Gospel when one:

- ❖ Misses worship services, not because of some compelling reason, but for the simple fact that the assembly of the saints is not high on his priority list?
- ❖ Fails to attend Bible classes where he can learn more of God’s Word, or if he is knowledgeable, help others to learn more of God’s Word?
- ❖ Criticizes the preacher and song leader for their subpar weekly “performance”?
- ❖ Whispers and passes notes all through worship, while refusing to join in the songs, prayers and Bible lesson?
- ❖ Gossips about someone?
- ❖ When one dresses provocatively and challenges the purity of those in his or her presence?

You see, my point is that one doesn’t have to stand up in the middle of church and interrupt a worship service to hinder the Gospel of Christ.

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There are many subtle ways that one can hinder the Gospel without really realizing that this is what he is doing.

Brethren, give care and attention to your lives. Don't allow yourself to unwittingly be used as a tool of Satan to hinder the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Consider this thought: If today God chose to strike blind, as he did in Acts 13:6-11, all of us who were hindering the Gospel, would you need someone to help you read this article? 

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

Hindrances to Personal Prayer

Ronald D. Reeves

Our personal prayers are both unique and very meaningful to each one. They maintain our spiritual connection to the Lord and assist in relieving personal anxiety concerning challenges in life. Yet, all of our prayers have this in common: they may be hindered by a variety of circumstances. Following are some things that hinder prayers. (1) Harboring secret sin in the heart will cut off communication with God (Psalm 66:18). (2) Unbelief will hinder one's prayer life (James 1:6-7). (3) Selfishness will assure no results from one's prayers (James 4:3). (4) An unforgiving spirit will hinder the divine reception of prayer (Mark 11:25). (5) A lack of patience may cause failure in one's prayer life (Luke 18:1-7). (6) Formalism can hinder personal prayers (Luke 18:9-14). (7) A failure to live with one's spouse in a God-approved manner may hinder our prayers (1 Peter 3:7). With these things in mind, may we cleanse our hearts and ***“ask in faith, nothing wavering”*** (James 1:6). Yes, our divine Heavenly Father continues to answer prayers. We must remember that He does so according to His will rather than according to our wills. May each of our prayers be pleasing to the Lord. 

Ronald D. Reeves preaches for the College Avenue Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.

We Shall Assemble on the Mountain!

Mark N. Posey

Introduction: We worship God because He is worthy (Revelation 4:11; 5:12). Man is not worthy of worship and neither are the things man invents; yet, man invents many things that occupy his time and energy in praise, love and affection. Man must worship the right object. What are the types of worship, either right or wrong, revealed in the New Testament?

1. VAIN Worship—When we follow the commandments of men instead of God’s instructions, our worship becomes vain. Vain worship is empty, hollow and useless; it will do us no good. If it is vain, it is as though we have not worshipped God at all, and we will be lost. When we worship in the way “we want,” then God is dishonored and insulted (Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:7). The word “vain” is an adverb from the Greek word “maten,” meaning, “fruitlessly.” *Vain worship is unacceptable.*

2. IGNORANT Worship—When the apostle Paul was in Athens, he encountered people who were worshiping all kinds of false gods, as well as One whom they called “The Unknown God.” He took the opportunity to tell them about “*the One whom you worship without knowing*” (Acts 17:16-31). While preaching to them, he let them know that “*these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent*” (v. 30). *Ignorant worship is unacceptable.*

3. CREATURE Worship—The Creator is self-existent, unconditioned and unlimited in power and knowledge. The creature owes its very existence to the Creator. To substitute the worship of the creature for that of the Creator is the height of perverseness and folly, meriting the retribution of the wrath of God, thus resulting in the “lie.” Paul uses the *definite article* in Romans 1:25; it is not *a* lie, but *the* lie. The lie is essentially *idolatry*—which puts a thing in the place of God; it is the lie that you elevate a created object or yourself to be like God (Genesis 3:5). *Creature worship is unacceptable.*

4. SELF-IMPOSED Worship—To the Colossians, Paul talked

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about doctrines and commandments which while appearing wise and godly, nevertheless originated with men. He referred to this as “*self-imposed worship*,” or as in the KJV, “*will worship*” (Colossians 2:20-23). Thus, God is not pleased with those that “will worship,” or self impose upon themselves that which is not allowed. *Self-imposed worship is unacceptable.*

5. TRUE Worship— True worship is God-centered! True worshipers worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This means worship is from the heart and the way God has designed, and it is reserved only for God. Only He is worthy, and not any of His servants (Revelation 19:10). We are not to worship saints, prophets, statues, angels, any false gods or Mary, the mother of Jesus. Worship is to glorify and exalt God—to show our loyalty, respect, appreciation and admiration to our Father. True worship is the only worship that God will accept and approve.

Conclusion: The highest form worship is obedience to God and His Word. We must obey Him instead of man. 

Mark N. Posey works with the Austinville church in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

Of What Does True Worship Consist?

1. The disciples in the first century met on the **FIRST DAY** of the week to worship God (Acts 20:7).
2. They studied the Scriptures (Acts 2:42; 20:7,11).
3. They prayed to God in the name of Christ (Acts 2:42; John 14:13).
4. They sang hymns (no mechanical instrument is mentioned in their worship, though instruments were known and available, the first ones being invented by Jubal, only the seventh generation from Adam; God wants His creation to praise Him, not something we have made (1 Corinthians 14:15).
5. They ate the memorial supper in remembrance of the Lord's death (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
6. They gave of their material possessions (1 Corinthians 16:2).

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The Fat is Mine

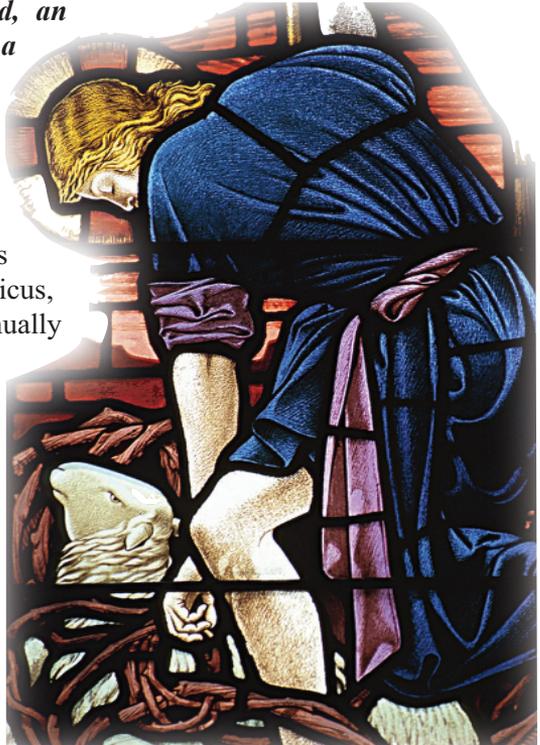
Jason Zuehlke

As we go through life, how do we look at what we have? Is it ALL mine because I earned or accumulated it? Do I share it because I can? How am I to use it? A question as a Christian is, “What do I give to God?”

I’ve started reviewing the Old Testament to get a better understanding of history and God’s nature so I can better understand and apply the teachings in the New Testament. In this review I noticed that in the animal sacrifices described in Leviticus chapters 1 and 3, all the fat was to be offered to God. Leviticus 3:16 reads, *“and the priest shall burn*

them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma; all the fat is the Lord’s.”

I started thinking about this *“all the fat is the Lord’s.”* I had just finished reading Exodus before coming to Leviticus, and I saw that God continually provided for His people. Now that He had delivered them, He asked for the fat. He allowed Aaron and His sons to have food from certain offerings, but only the substances needed and not the “extra.” I learned from this that God provides for the needs of His people and asks for us to give



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from the abundance.

In the New Testament, we see in 1 Corinthians 16:2, ***“Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.”*** Paul instructed Christians to ***“lay by in store”*** as they had prospered, not to deprive themselves of what we *needed* but to give of the excess.

How hard is it to give of our extra? How much do we consider to be “extra” and available to the Lord? Christ gave us warning of not considering God in our plans. In Luke 12:16-21, He told a parable of a rich man who had a bountiful harvest but couldn’t fit it all into his current storage, so he decided to build more storage space. So far in the account there is nothing negative said about having much, but we see the dangers in the next verses. The rich man decided he would store up all of his wealth for his own benefit. According to Luke 12:19, he planned, ***“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’”***

Where was this man’s thankfulness to God? What did he want to give to God in gratitude for his immeasurable blessings? Where was his concern for the hurting people around him? He had a great abundance, far more than he would ever need, but his focus was not on God as the Giver of all blessings. He was only looking inwardly toward himself. For this reason, ***“God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”*** (Luke 12:20).

We all need the necessities of life, but do we keep God in our hearts and give a portion of that with which we are blessed back to Him? We must remember, God knows what we need, and as His children He will look after us. Luke 12:31 says, ***“But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.”***

What will you seek after? The riches of this world or the treasures in Heaven? Don’t forget to give the “fat” to God. Use what you have as a tool to serve the God Who created us and all that we have. 

Jason Zuehlke, Youth Bible Study Teacher in Indianola, Mississippi, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



Seen on a birthday card:

Forget about the past,

You can't change it.

Forget about the future,

You can't predict it.

Inside:

Forget about the present.

I didn't buy you one!



A sergeant and a private in the army were travelling together on a train. Sitting across from them in the same compartment and facing them was a mother and her beautiful daughter. As the train entered a tunnel, everything went black as coal. Then, there was the sound of a kiss and a slap on the face.

The following is what went through the minds of these four people.

The Mother was appalled

that this private in the army would be so presumptuous as to kiss her daughter, but at least her daughter had enough good sense to slap him in the face for taking such liberties.

The sergeant couldn't blame the private for kissing the beautiful young lady, but he wished her aim in the dark had been a little better since she slapped him in the face and not the private.

The private sat in the darkness with a satisfied grin thinking, "How often is it that you get to kiss a pretty girl and slap your sergeant in the face, all in the same day!"



The doctor took Ben into the room and said, "Ben, I have some good news and some bad news."

Ben said, "Give me the good news."

"They're going to name a disease after you."



My wife gets some crazy ideas. She claims that I'm a baseball fanatic. She says all I ever read about is baseball, all I ever talk about is baseball, and all I ever

PROVERBS 17:22

think about is baseball.

I told her that she's way off base.



On a mountain-climbing expedition the Swiss guide warned an American tourist, "Be especially careful not to fall; it's a dangerous place. However, if you do fall," he added nonchalantly, "remember to look to the right – the view is extraordinary!"



- If you can start the day without caffeine,
- If you are always cheerful,
- If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,
- If you are understanding when your loved ones are too busy for you,
- If you never treat a rich friend better than a poor friend,
- If you face the world without lies and deceit,
- ...then you are probably the family dog!



The Law of Location: No matter where you go, there you are.



"My tire was thumping.

I thought it was flat.

When I looked at the tire. . .

I noticed your cat.

Sorry!"



A mother took her small children to a restaurant, and when their food was delivered the 6-year-old son asked if he could say the prayer. They bowed their heads and he said, "God is good, God is great, and we thank You for the food, and I would even thank You more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all. Amen."



Just an honest assessment of old Clem—If he ever said what's on his mind he'd be speechless.



It has been said that diets are for people who are thick and tired of it.

How Do You Measure Up?

The angel of the Lord encamps all around
those who fear Him, and delivers them...

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and His ears are open to their cry.

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the
righteous,

But the Lord delivers him out
of them all.

He guards all his bones;
Not one of them is broken.

Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the
righteous shall be con-
demned.

The Lord redeems the
soul of His servants,
And none of those who
trust in Him shall be
condemned.

Psalm 34:7, 15-22

Being a Servant

Gary C. Hampton

Paul proclaimed Jesus as the ultimate example of a servant. He followed that example in serving the church in Philippi. He was able to broaden his service to the various churches by sending faithful messengers to them, such as Timothy, whom he trusted to check on the welfare of the church at Philippi. Timothy would deliver word from Paul to them and report back the things he had seen in the church. Paul expected the report to be good, as he said it would comfort him (Philippians 2:1-19).

Timothy was the one upon whom Paul could depend to be concerned for the welfare of the church (Philippians 2:20). He told the Corinthian brethren, ***“Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do”*** (1 Corinthians 16:10). Paul’s confidence in Timothy can be seen as he described him as a fellow worker, ***“true son in the faith”*** and a brother who had preached among the Corinthians (Romans 16:21; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1,19).

Concern for the church at Thessalonica drove Paul to choose to be left alone in Athens and send ***“Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith”*** (1 Thessalonians 3:12). Others sought only their own personal gain, but Timothy, like a coin or precious metal that had been proven genuine, was known as one who loved the church as dearly as Paul, his father in the faith. The apostle planned to send him to Philippi as soon as Paul knew how his trial would go. He believed in God’s providence and felt sure he would soon be released so he could visit Philippi firsthand (Philippians 2:21-24).

Each of us can make a difference by displaying the heart of a servant. Let us focus on the welfare of others and sacrifice to provide their needs. ✝

Gary C. Hampton preaches for the Siwell Road congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.



Gambling: A Bad Bet

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

There was a time in this nation when gambling was considered wrong and morally evil. Now it is estimated that 75% of Americans wager money. Last year more people went to casinos than attended major league baseball games. The total amount spent by all church members of every brand and stripe in benevolence for a whole year would only equal the amount Americans gamble in just three and one-half days. A half trillion dollars are wagered annually in this country.

What was once considered a **vice** is now considered **nice**. George Washington once said, “This is a vice which is productive of every possible evil. It is the child of avarice, the brother of iniquity and the father of mischief.” It matters not how respectable gambling appears to be. It remains a bad bet.

1. It is bad for families. Promoters promise big bucks for education, senior citizens, public parks, etc. However, less than half of the lottery money is returned to the states. Some state coffers netted only

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one-percent profit. Yet, who is shelling out more than ten billion a year in lottery tickets? Seventy-five percent of those who buy the tickets are poor. Some low-income families spent 20% of their income on lottery tickets. With some, it's like a fever that takes hold of them.

2. It is bad for crime. Two out of three problem gamblers commit crimes to finance their habit. One report linked 40% of white-collar crimes to gambling. Just ten years following the introduction of casino gambling in Atlantic City, criminal activity increased by 100%. In nearby Mississippi where the casinos have gone up, armed robbery and rapes have tripled, and burglary, larceny and car theft have doubled. There's no doubt that organized crime, with loan sharks and prostitution, follow closely the gambling business.

3. It is bad for business. Gambling diverts money from retail business. One university study revealed that for every dollar gambling revenues bring into a state, citizens will pay from three to seven dollars in hidden costs such as law enforcement. That does not make economic sense.

4. It is bad for youth. Adolescents are twice as likely as adults to become addicted to gambling. Eighty percent of adult compulsive gamblers started wagering before age 14. It starts with betting on sports events, board games or games of personal skill. Gambling has been called the "fastest growing addiction" in America. You'd be surprised to know, but it is true, that parents have drained bank accounts, taken out second mortgages and cashed in IRAs to cover their children's gambling debts.



Gambling is a bad bet! It violates every principle of honesty, work, responsibility and stewardship in the Bible. It is a scourge and blight upon America, and it has no place in the life of the Christian. ✝

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

A Tolerant View of Sin

Jim Poland

Have we developed a more tolerant view of sin? Remember when sin was called sin? Now, it is referred to as a disorder of a victim!

A thief was once called just that, an out-and-out thief. Now the poor unfortunate soul is suffering from kleptomania (from a Greek word for thief). Yet, if we label or diagnose it as kleptomania, then it is just a disorder, an illness. If someone steals cash from a cash register, he is called guilty of “petty larceny.” Should a person empty the company bank account and head for foreign soil, he is just “misappropriating funds.”

Sodomy and homosexuality were once disgusting perversions (fornication). Now, they are accepted, even glorified with the term “gay” in much of the culture today. Homosexuality is even promoted as just an “alternate lifestyle” or “sexual orientation.” As one explanation goes, you may be right-handed or another left-handed; accordingly, some are heterosexual and others are homosexual.

Our society has gone to great lengths to compromise itself out of any moral decency and courageous virtue for the truth! We cannot blame God and genetic makeup for sin and perversion!

The Bible says, ***“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren”*** (James 1:13-16). Those who practice the ***“works of the flesh”*** shall not ***“inherit the kingdom of God”*** (Galatians 5:16-21).

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous,

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nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Thievery, drunkenness, homosexuality and such like are still sins that must not be practiced and for which sinners must repent because sins separate man from God. They render people to be unrighteous, and thus, the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God! One cannot be a child of God and a faithful member of His church while practicing such things.

All everywhere are called to be washed of these things and to be sanctified and justified in the blessed name of Jesus our Lord and the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit inspired this message to those in Corinth who had once practiced such a lifestyle. *"And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Those who practice ungodliness and unrighteousness as well as those who approve of such do *"not like to retain God in their knowledge"* (Romans 1:28; cf. 1:18-32). *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). All, therefore, need to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus unto the remission of sins and to be added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:38-47). All thus saved are to live as far from sin as possible. *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22).

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7). *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever"* (1 John 2:15-17). 

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

God's Heritage

Dwight Fuqua

Don't you just love children? I do! Their energy and innocence are a joy to behold. The sparkle in a child's eye is more dazzling than diamonds and can charm even the most hardhearted.

Children are so precious! Never forget that your children are a blessing from God. In the words of Solomon, ***“Children are a heritage from the Lord”*** (Psalm 127:3). As parents, we are the stewards of our children's lives. As stewards, we have the awesome responsibility to ***“bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6:4). We have often pondered these words, ***“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”*** (Proverbs 22:6).

We make every effort to ensure our children's physical welfare. We want the best food, clothing and education that money can buy. “Nothing but the best for my child!” Right! What about their spiritual lives? Can we afford to neglect their spiritual welfare? What benefit is teaching them how to make a living unless we teach them how to live? So many children today have everything “with” which to live and nothing “for” which to live. How tragic!

What about your children? What about your grandchildren? Do they attend Sunday School and Bible Study? Do you “send” them or do you “bring” them? Your children need to be in Bible classes and worship assemblies regularly. So, do you! **Worship should be a family affair!**

What about the spiritual training of your children at home? The Bible classes they attend on Sunday and Wednesday are intended to **supplement** (not supplant) their training at home. ***“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house. When you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”*** (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). The challenge of our lives! Don't you just love your children? ✝

Dwight Fuqua preaches for the Findlay church of Christ in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

"God, Marriage and Me"

Dan R. Owen



The most precious thing in our lives is our relationship with God. One way or another, that relationship cannot be separated from one's marriage. If one is unmarried, one's relationship with God depends on whether one honors the institution of marriage in one's conduct. If one is married, the conduct of that marriage is inseparable from one's relationship with God. The church needs always to place a strong emphasis on biblical marriage because in doing this we are helping people to be saved eternally. For those who are married, marriage impacts one's relationship with God.

It is God who made marriage in the first place. It is part of His creative order. It was the marriage of one man and one woman. It was a life partnership, a life commitment. It is a holy and fundamental institution of God.

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God is involved in the covenant of marriage. He is a divine Witness to a sacred pact when two people vow to be married to each other. God actually joins them, records their joining in heaven and is personally interested in the permanence of the relationship.

God is involved in the daily conduct of marriage. He is involved in the little stuff, the everyday things that make up the moments of our lives. He is involved in the daily conversations, interactions, discussions, chores, phone calls, promises and everything that transpires between a married couple. God commands mutual submission to one another's needs. He commands kindness, unselfishness, understanding, nurturing and the sharing of all the good things of life. We are doing the will of God as Christians as we consciously work to conduct ourselves toward our spouse as God has commanded us in His Word. We do this so that our 'prayers will not be hindered.' **We cannot keep God out of marriage.**

Fidelity in marriage is directly involved with spiritual welfare. Maintaining a healthy sexual relationship with one's spouse is part of God's command (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Marital infidelity is a practice that causes souls to be lost eternally (Hebrews 13:4).

Marriage in God's eyes is permanent. We can't trade spouses like cars. Fornication and death are God's only provisions for ending a marriage. The bottom line is that marriage and spiritual welfare go together. My marriage and my walk with God are inseparable. In view of this, each of us should do whatever it takes to honor the covenant of marriage. ✝

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

Did You Know? According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the marriage rate in the United States has fallen from 8.2 per 1,000 total population in 2000 to 6.9 per 1,000 total population in 2014. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the divorce rate in the United States has fallen from 4.0 per 1,000 total population in 2000 to 3.2 per 1,000 total population in 2014.





5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

Daniel

1. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as _____; He does according to _____ in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can _____ His hand or say to Him, "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35).
2. "Now I, _____, praise and extol and honor the _____ of heaven, all of whose works are _____, and His ways _____. And those who walk in _____ He is able to put down" (Daniel 4:37).
3. "But you His son, _____, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the _____ of his house before you, and you and your lords, and your wives and your concubines, have drunk _____ from them. And you have praised the _____ of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not _____" (Daniel 5:22-23).
4. "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! And He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given _____ and _____ and a _____, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an _____ dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one that shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).
5. "And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, O Lord, _____ and awesome God, who keeps His _____ and mercy with those who _____ Him, and with those who keep His _____" (Daniel 9:4).



- Answers:**
1. Nothing, his will, restrained
 2. Nebuchadnezzar, king,
 3. Belshazzar, vessels, wine, mandaments
 4. Dominion, glory, kingdom, gods, glorified
 5. Great, covenant, love, com- everlasting

“He Who Is Not Against Us Is on Our Side”

Kevin L. Moore

The apostles had forbidden a man who did not follow them from casting out demons in Jesus' name. In response, the Lord said, *“Do not forbid him... for he who is not against us is on our side”* (Mark 9:38-40). What did Jesus mean by this statement, and what implications does it have for us today?

The ability to work miracles could have only come from one of two sources: from God (John 3:2) or from the



TEXTUAL STUDIES

devil (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The man whom the apostles had forbidden could not have received his power from the devil, because ***“if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself”*** (Matthew 12:26). This man’s ability to cast out demons, therefore, must have come from God. Jesus had other disciples besides the twelve who were given the power to cast out demons (cf. Luke 10:11-17).

What, then, did the apostles mean when they said, he ***“does not follow us”***? In Luke’s account, they are recorded as saying, ***“he does not follow with us”*** (Luke 9:49). That is to say, he was not in the “inner circle” of the apostles, although he was still a faithful disciple of Jesus. While some had improper motives and sought to use miracles for the wrong reasons (Matthew 24:24; Acts 8:18-21; 19:13-17), this man was evidently not an enemy of the truth.

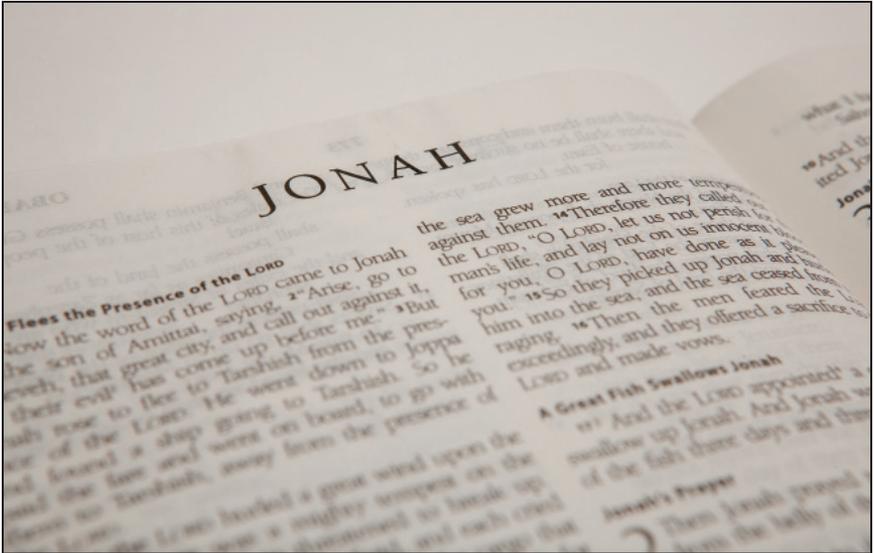
In context, the apostles had been disputing over ***“who would be the greatest”*** (Mark 9:33-34). Their arrogance was further exhibited in trying to forbid someone from doing good deeds in Christ’s name, simply because he was not an eminent apostle. Jesus assured them that the man is ***“on our side.”*** This situation is similar to that recorded in Numbers 11:24-30. Two of Israel’s elders were prophesying in the camp rather than at the tabernacle. Joshua told Moses to ***“forbid them,”*** but Moses affirmed that these men were of God and were not to be forbidden.

From the perspective of truth versus error, the Lord’s judgment is clear: ***“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad”*** (Matthew 12:30). Yet, from the standpoint of jealous apostles who would forbid the good works of a fellow disciple, Jesus said, ***“he who is not against us is on our side.”*** In the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, there is no neutral position. One is either on the Lord’s side or on the devil’s side. On whose side do you stand? 

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

He was not in the “inner circle” of the apostles, although he was still a faithful disciple of Jesus.

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It's More Than a Fish Story

David Shannon

Jonah's prejudice caused him to run from Nineveh instead of toward it when God commanded him to preach to the Ninevites. He finally did preach to them, but remember that the message was to tell them of their destruction unless they repented. They repented! When God's mercy was extended to Nineveh, Jonah was all of a sudden so sorrowful he would have rather died! In anger and disgust he explained, ***“I knew that thou art a gracious God.”***

Jonah's Prejudice Produced Problems (Chapters 1-3):

1. Prejudice is pride based, but effective evangelism is based on humility.

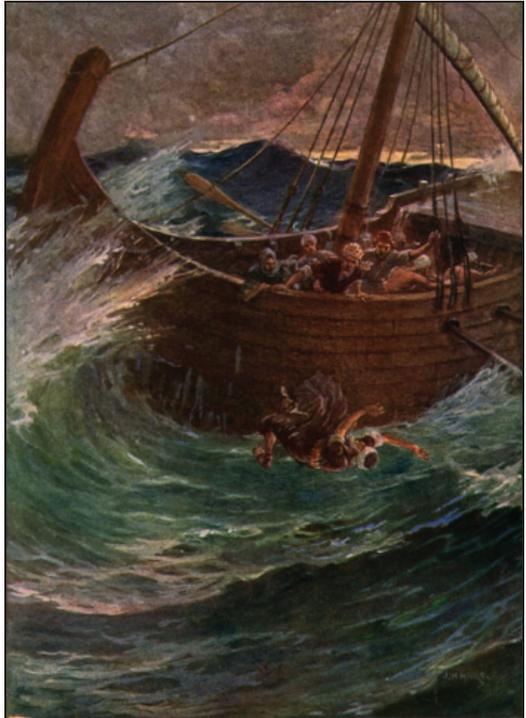
TEXTUAL STUDIES

2. Prejudice causes folks to avoid others, but a heart for evangelism causes folks to go to others.
3. Prejudice will lead to terrible dilemmas (even the stinky belly of a fish), but a heart of evangelism will lead others to peace.

Jonah's Prejudice Produced Pessimism (Chapter 4):

4. A pessimistic person will even be disgruntled about God.
5. A pessimistic person will even be disgruntled about God's grace.
6. A pessimistic person will even be disgruntled when a sinner repents.
7. A pessimistic person will even think that to die is better than living.

Prejudice and pessimism are still enemies of evangelism. Let's be a church that invites and welcomes all to the Lord. Let's be a church that hopes what is best for others. Can you rejoice when an enemy repents? Do you fail to invite some people because you "know" they would never serve God?



Don't be a pessimist, but an evangelist!



David Shannon preaches for the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, USA.

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Misusing Matthew 18:20 “Where Two or Three Are Gathered”

Wes McAdams

I’ve often heard Jesus’ words, “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them*” (Matthew 18:20) quoted countless times, but I don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone use these words with their original meaning. Most people apply this passage to Bible studies or worship assemblies, but that’s not really what the Lord was talking about. Here are a few thoughts on how this passage gets misused and what it’s really about.

How It’s Misused

This is usually how I hear this passage used. See if any of these statements sound familiar.

- “When we go on vacation, we don’t visit an area congregation; we just have a devotional in our hotel room. You know what the Lord said, *‘Where two or three are gathered...’*”
- “My family had some conflicts with some people at church. Now we just worship as a family every week. You know what the Lord said, *‘Where two or three are gathered...’*”
- “I don’t belong to a church. I just meet with some friends for a Bible study at a coffee shop. You know what the Lord said, *‘Where two or three are gathered...’*”

I’ve also heard this passage quoted to justify meeting in a small congregation **without** elders, when these Christians could have gone a few miles down the road and merged with a congregation that had elders. Not only do statements like these reflect some other spiritual problems, they also ignore the very context of Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:20.

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“Two or Three” OR “Two or More”?

We usually interpret Jesus’ words “*two or three*” to mean “two or more.” It’s funny when a group of five people say, “We don’t have to meet with the church, there are five of us and you know what Jesus said...” Wait. Jesus said, “*Two or three,*” but “five” is not “*two or three.*”

If we would pay attention, we would see that verse 20 is not the only time the words “*two or three*” appear in the context. Matthew 18:16 says, “*But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.*” In fact, nearly every time Scripture talks about “two or three” people, it is talking about having two or three witnesses to establish a charge against someone.

In both the Old and New testaments, the Lord is very clear that His people should not entertain a charge against someone if it is just one person’s word against another’s word. There must be two or three witnesses to “convict” someone of wrongdoing (Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19). This is precisely the context of Matthew 18:20.

What Was Jesus Talking About?

The context of Jesus’ statement is about handling situations in the church where one brother has sinned against another. Jesus said:

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17)

Far from excusing people from the assembly of the church, Jesus is talking about the necessity of church discipline. He goes on to say that when Christians come together in agreement against someone who has sinned, **they can take comfort in knowing that Jesus is in their midst in**

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making such a difficult decision. In other words, they can know they are disciplining their brother by the authority of Jesus Christ.

Consider another passage of Scripture that will help us understand this passage. In the Corinthian church, those Christians had to apply what Jesus was talking about. They had to remove a brother from their assembly who was sleeping with his father's wife. Paul wrote to them saying, ***“When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord”*** (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

We do not discipline sinful Christians nearly enough today, and maybe one of the reasons is that we don't understand and apply Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20. He was saying, “I will be right there beside you when you make these difficult judgments.” What wonderful comfort that would be when someone must be disciplined.

But Isn't Jesus Still among Us Anyway?

The next question that usually follows is, “Okay, so maybe the context is church discipline and not worship, but that doesn't change the fact that Jesus is among us when we're in a small group setting.” That depends on what you mean.

Of course Jesus is always “with” His disciples (Matthew 28:20). Even when one Christian privately goes to the Lord in prayer, the Lord is with him or her, but this passage is all about “agreement.” It's about the church being in agreement in prayer concerning an erring brother (Matthew 18:18-19), and it is about Jesus being in agreement with the church (vs. 20).

If we are trying to justify avoiding the Lord's church, then we certainly can't take comfort in Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20. However, when we're having to discipline a brother in sin, what a comfort to know that He is right there with us, and we are doing it ***“with the power of the Lord Jesus”*** (1 Corinthians 5:4). 

Wes McAdams is the preacher for the Baker Heights congregation in Abilene, Texas, USA.



Scavenger Hunt

through Ruth

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. When does the Book of Ruth take place?
2. Name Naomi's husband and two sons.
3. What name did Naomi give herself after the deaths of her husband and sons?
4. Name the family member of Naomi's husband who owned the field where Ruth gathered.
5. How much barley did Ruth glean in the field of Boaz after he spoke to her?
6. At what time did Boaz wake to find Ruth at his feet?
7. How much barley did Boaz give to Ruth before sending her home?
8. What item was given as confirmation of a redeeming or exchanging transaction?
9. Which of Naomi's sons was Ruth's first husband?
10. Name the son, grandson and great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

Formerly a Blasphemer and a Persecutor

Andy Robison

The apostle Paul declared his thankfulness to God in several places. With these words in 1 Timothy, he focused his gratitude on the transformation God allowed, *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”* (1 Timothy 1:12-13). Paul’s pre-Christian lifestyle as Saul of Tarsus was one of a rising star in Judaism. At some point, he had moved from Tarsus in Cilicia to Jerusalem to study at the feet of the well-respected Gamaliel (Acts 21:39; 22:3, cf. 5:34). One might speculate that Paul could have been on course to be the next teacher of Israel and to be respected by all the people.

He might have lived in any other generation, but it so happened that he lived in the fullness of times when Christ came (Ephesians 1:10; Galatians 4:4). This altered his life immeasurably. At first, of course, he fought to preserve the order of Judaism in which he had been raised. He watched the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, possibly as an instigator rather than just a lad standing by (Acts 7:58). He was, indeed, *“consenting to his death”* (Acts 8:1). He *“made havoc of the church”* during the persecution that ensued (Acts 8:2-3). After a while, he *“was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord”* (Acts 9:1). His life was consumed with snuffing out this upstart religion known as Christianity. He was fueled by rage, but he was always careful to show the appearance of legality (Acts 9:2; 22:5). Though he acted in good conscience at the time (Acts 23:1-5, 26:9-11), he later acknowledged his role as a *“blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent man”* (1 Timothy 1:13).

He came to experience the forces of Christ that would overwhelm his

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disturbed error—grace, faith and love (1 Timothy 1:14). He would later write about how we *“have access by faith into this grace in which we stand”* and therefore experience *“peace with God”* (Romans 5:1-2). These forces of good were quite sufficient to overcome his evil ways (Romans 12:19-21). He pointed out the magnitude of God’s grace in the next verse. *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy 1:15). He mourned his past, but he relished the forgiveness in Christ.

His example turns out to be instructive. *“However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life”* (1 Timothy 1:16). Saul of Tarsus being transformed into Paul the apostle was quite an extreme case. No one is able to doubt just how far the Lord’s mercy will extend. Can a murderer be forgiven? Absolutely. Any criminal? Of course. There were a lot of people in the Corinthian church who had come out of sordid lifestyles, but they were forgiven (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Note that his error was forgiven because he *“did it ignorantly in unbelief”* (1 Timothy 1:13). He was trying to hold on to his former lifestyle because it was all that he knew. Still, it was sinful (Acts 3:17-19). Even so, it is different than those who revert to a bad lifestyle after knowing better (Hebrews 10:26). Presumptuous (as opposed to unintentional) sins under the Old Law had dire consequences (Numbers 15:30-31).

The life of Paul and this passage of reflection in 1 Timothy therefore teaches: (1) God’s mercy is big enough to forgive anyone, no matter how vile the world may view his or her sins. (2) At the same time, do not presume upon the grace of God. When warned, obey. Procrastination or reversion for selfishness’ sake is quite uncomfortably presumptive (2 Peter 2:20-22; 2 Corinthians 6:2).



Andy Robinson is a preacher and the Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA.



Did You Know?

The oldest living man died as a 969-year-old (Genesis 5:27).

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Practicing "Paul"

Glenn Colley

In 1 Corinthians 4:16 Paul wrote, *"Wherefore I exhort you to be imitators of me..."*, and in Chapter 11:1 he penned, *"Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

That is good advice for us. Walk through 1 Corinthians with me and consider some traits of Paul we ought to practice.

In his message and his motives, he was totally loyal to Jesus Christ. *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"* (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Clearly a man may have right motives and a wrong message, or the right message and a wrong motive. Paul was loyal on both counts.

He practiced self-denial out of a love for lost souls. *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you"* (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Paul did not suggest here that we should compromise principles of faith in order to convert people, but rather matters of indifference. He put others above himself and his preferences.

He practiced self-discipline out of a love for his own soul. *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (1 Corinthians

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9:27). Some become their own worst enemy. We can never expect to have God's approval as Christians without self-restraint. Just because I'm tempted to sin doesn't mean I have a license to commit the sin (Romans 6:1).

He practiced self-restraint in the church out of a love for teaching truth and the welfare of the whole church. ***“Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue”*** (1 Corinthians 14:19). While speaking the “ten thousand words” might have shown people Paul's impressive abilities, Paul didn't care about that. The praise of men was nothing when compared to the teaching of the lost and the stability of the church. Pride is what makes men ineffective today. They simply lose track of what is really important.

He practiced humility out of a love for God's grace. ***“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”*** (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). 

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

KENNEY'S PENNIES



“Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again’” (Matthew 20:17-19 NKJV.)

The Old Testament prophesied the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. Jesus Himself warned His disciples of the coming rejection; so why do premillennialists claim that this rejection caught God off guard so He came up with the church when He really wanted to set up the kingdom? Because premillennialism is FALSE.

Jesus and the Sabbath Day

Russell G. Bell

Question: “Isn’t it true that Jesus kept the Sabbath day? Isn’t it also true that He is our example, and if He kept it, we should keep it, too?”

Answer: *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law”* (Galatians 4:4).

Certainly, Jesus would keep the Sabbath as well as keep the other points of the law including animal sacrifices because he was *“born under the law”* (Old Testament), and therefore, He was subject to it. The Bible student will recall that this is what made Jesus a worthy sacrifice for the sins of the world, because he was the perfect Lamb—no sin, not one violation of God’s old will, the Old Testament.

Let us review when the Old Testament or the old will ended and at what point the New Testament or the new will started by looking at a couple of Scriptures. *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law [Old Testament], having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”* (Genesis 3:13).

Therefore, we see Christ redeemed us from the Law (Old Testament). When? When He hung on the tree. In plain English, when He was crucified, He removed the Old Law.

If you had a last will and testament, when would its terms go into effect? Of course, when you died.

The same was true with Jesus’ will, the New Testament. Its terms became effective when He was crucified.

“Wherefore my brethren, we also were made dead to the Law [Old Testament] through the body of Christ that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God” (Romans 7:4). 

Russell G. Bell lives in Topeka, Kansas, USA and is involved in full-time mission work in India.

BIBLE QUESTIONS



What Does the Bible Say?

Dennis Gulledge

Question: “Please discuss the need to ‘pray with the understanding’ and the overuse of certain expressions and phrases in public prayers.”

Answer: The phrase, “*pray with the understanding*” is found in 1 Corinthians 14:15. It is in the context of Paul’s teaching about miraculous gifts in the 1st century church at Corinth. Paul taught them that they should speak in a language that their hearers could understand (vs. 9, 14, 16). The point being, as far as Paul was concerned, he would not sing or pray in a tongue (language) unless he could interpret so as to be understood by all.

The principle here applies in that when men lead in public prayer they need to speak so that those who hear may say, “Amen.” A show of eloquence is not what is needed. Perhaps more importantly, they need to speak loudly enough to be heard.

As to the overuse of certain expressions in public prayers, it is often a matter of habit, conditioning or perhaps even nerves. I know of no right or wrong associated with it. I know men who use the words “gracious God” repeatedly in their public prayers. It is noticeable to the hearer, but

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is certainly not wrong. Jesus' words of "*vain repetition*" (Matthew 6:7-8) don't apply here. The Gentiles tried to wear out their gods with repeated expressions. The Jews had such prayer formulas, as do the Catholics.

Question: "Why was Cain's offering unacceptable?"

Answer: The Bible says, "*And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell*" (Genesis 4:3-5). The text continues, "*So the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it'*" (vs. 6-7). The point being: Let Cain gain the mastery over his sin, and then his sacrifice would be accepted as readily as Abel's. That is, Cain's sacrifice would have been acceptable to God if it had been the expression of a devoted and obedient heart.

Since Cain was told that he would be accepted by God if he did well, it follows that Abel was accepted because he did well. In other words, because he was righteous. In Matthew 23:35 Jesus said that Abel was indeed righteous. John said, "*not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous*" (1 John 3:12).

In Hebrews 11:4, the writer says, "*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*" That is, Abel was attested a righteous man. How? Because "*God testifying of his gifts*" (offering) said that he was righteous. The underlying principle of Scripture in this matter is summed up in this: "*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight*" (Proverbs 15:8). For us today, it is well to remember, "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). 

Dennis Gullede preaches for the church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

Signs of Being Born of God

Jerry Bates

Introduction:

1. In our modern religious world, we hear a lot about *being born again*.
2. Many people do not really understand what being born again is all about.
 - a. Some think it is a one-time religious experience with little impact on our present lives.
 - b. Others think it is just a theological term, which means nothing more than accepting Christ as Savior.
 - c. Some give little attention to it at all.
3. The apostle John said much more about being born again than anyone else.
4. We often associate John 3 with the idea of being born again. There, Jesus discussed the process of being born again.
5. Presently, we are going to look at the idea of being “born of God” in 1 John. This phrase is used in six verses in this book. On one occasion, the pronoun “him” is used in place of God.
6. The Book of 1 John was written to a church that was experiencing problems because of false teachers within the church (2:18-19). Some of the error being taught by these people seems to have been:
 - a. They had fellowship with God and were sinless (1:6, 8, 10).
 - b. They knew God, yet refused to keep Jesus’ commands (2:4).
 - c. They denied that Jesus was the Son of God (2:22; 5:1, 5)
 - d. They denied that Jesus had come in the flesh (4:2).
 - e. They may have denied the existence of any law, which would explain their contention of sinlessness.
7. By looking at John’s usage of the terms, we can see that this phrase “**born of God**” is very important and should have a great impact on our lives. We must remember that John was not discussing **how** to enter God’s family,

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but rather the **results** of entering God's family.

8. John said that there are certain signs which characterize those who are born of God. John penned, "Become what you are."

9. What are the signs that follow those who are born of God?

Body:

I. Being born of God expresses itself in righteousness and sinlessness.

A. 1 John 2:29.

1. There is no difference in the meaning of the word "righteous" describing Christ and practicing "righteousness" describing Christians.
2. Righteous conduct is not a requirement for the new birth but a consequence of it.
3. Both expressions refer to correct moral behavior. If one is a child of God, he will live right.
4. Some may think that if one is part of the family of God, "What more do we need?"
5. For life to be life, it must be lived. "*Be ye holy; for I am holy*" (1 Peter 1:16).

B. 1 John 3:9; 5:18. "*No one who is born of God will continue to sin*" (3:9). "*We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin*" (5:18).

1. This is basically a negative way of saying what appears in 2:29. This concludes a discussion of the same topic that began in 2:28. The verbs in 3:9 are all in the present tense.
2. Satan has always told man not to be concerned with sin. "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*" (Romans 6:1).
3. John was not saying sin is impossible with a Christian, but simply that it is incompatible with being a child of God. John was pointing out the ideal character of a Christian.
 - a. This does not mean a Christian will literally never sin (1:8).
 - b. He will not continue to live in sin because his life is con-

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trolled by God's Word.

4. The seed is the Word of God. ***“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”*** (1 Peter 1:23).
5. When occasionally we make a mistake, Christ's blood cleanses us from our sins (1 John 1:7).
6. Example: Walking across a swamp and stepping off the path makes one's clothes nasty. However, spiritually when we step off the narrow path, Christ's blood automatically cleanses us so we remain pure.
7. 3:10 summarizes John's argument. It is made plain who the child of God is by his lives (i.e., doing righteousness). For one to do right implies the existence of a standard or a law. This rules out moral relativism. Love is a command.

II. Being born of God expresses itself in love (1 John 4:7-8).

- A. God is love. Love is not just one characteristic or activity of God, but all of His activities comprise His loving activity. He created in love. He rules in love. He judges in love.
- B. We must love because love is from God. God is source of love (**1 John 3:16**).
 1. We love God. ***“If you love Me, keep My commandments”*** (John 14:15).
 - a. This is not merely an outward service, but a service from a sincere heart.
 - b. Many claim to love God, but they do not keep his commandments.
 2. We love others (**3:14-15**).
 3. This kind of love will even cause one to be willing to die for our brethren. If we don't love, it simply shows we have no true knowledge of God.
 4. How do we love others? We live it or practice it (**3:17-18**). If we are not willing to sacrifice material advantages for the good of our brother, then we know that the love of God is not in us.

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C. What about those in the world that loves?

1. Many think they love simply because they do not hate. Hatred is wanting to harm another; so since I do not want to harm anyone, I love. This makes love merely the absence of bad deeds. True love is the presence of good deeds, as evidenced above.
2. Supposing that the absence of hate equals love is a wrong understanding of biblical love.
3. Love is only one sign of being born of God. Yet, if one does not love—demonstrate love—he proves that he is not of God.

III. Being born of God is based on a proper understanding of Jesus as the Son of God (1 John 5:1, 4).

A. 1 John 5:1.

1. Faith is a condition of the new birth, but it is also a sign of the new birth. Again, this is present tense, which indicates living out the faith.
2. John had already pointed out in 2:22 that whoever denies Jesus is the Christ is a liar and an antichrist.
3. “Christ” means the anointed of God—anointed to be both king and priest.
 - a. King carries the idea of authority (keep his commandments).
 - b. Priest carries the idea of mediator between God and us as well as of offering sacrifices for us.

B. 1 John 5:4-5.

1. Faith allows us to overcome the world.
2. This faith is faith in Christ as the Son of God.
3. This implies equality with God, plus being the same in essence and in nature.
4. ***“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”*** (John 20:31).
5. This firm faith in Christ allows us to overcome the world and all of its temptations. Without that faith, there is no reason to fight the temptation of sin.

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- C. This intellectual assent of certain facts is essential.
1. Certainly, a spiritual relationship with God is necessary, but that is based on the intellectual assent of these basic facts (i.e., Jesus is God, He came in the flesh, He resurrected, etc.).
 2. This faith is essentially the same as confessing Christ in **4:2-3**. Thus we see that there are certain facts that must be understood correctly and believed for a person to be part of God's family.
 3. Some so-called "Christians" in various religious groups, including many great scholars and preachers, do not believe those basic things as historical facts. They deny the Virgin Birth, miracles and the resurrection.

Conclusion:

1. Spiritual life is not a once-for-all gift, but a life that has to express itself in the proper behavior of the Christian.
2. Thus, we have seen three signs of being born of God:
 - a. Obedience. Not sinning, that is, not practicing sin or continuing to sin.
 - b. Loving God, fellow Christians and all others (doing good).
 - c. Faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.
3. These three things are interwoven so tightly that they cannot be separated.
4. Being a Christian is more of a description of what one does rather than just what one is.
5. Jesus in John 3 described the process of becoming born of God—born of water and the spirit. When we submit to baptism in obedience to the commandments of God, we are born again by the power of God. ***"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). Paul called it "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5).***
6. We encourage you to be born again, and then to live a life consistent with that new birth. 

Jerry Bates is one of the Editors of this publication as well as a foreign missionary. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



Thesis: To pass along a sober message from beyond the grave, courtesy of someone who knows first hand about hell.

Song: *There's a Great Day Coming*

Introduction:

1. Sometimes brethren question whether Luke 16:19-31 is a parable.
 - a. It doesn't matter whether Luke 16:19-31 is a parable.
 - b. Luke 16:19-31 is true irrespective of whether it is a parable; Jesus didn't tell any lies!
2. Luke 16:19-31 presents an unusual opportunity to learn a valuable lesson from a dead man.
 - a. The rich man spoke from Hades (Luke 19:23 ASV).
 - b. Hebrews 11:4 refers to Abel, in a sense, speaking from the dead.
3. Interestingly, if the rich man were resurrected from the dead, he would have preached **a fire and brimstone** sermon!
 - a. He was unconcerned about living or preaching for God while he was alive.

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- b. After death, though, he desperately desired to preach the Word of God to his family.
- c. There are a number of things he could have preached were he resurrected and given an opportunity.

Body:

I. Death is a certainty.

- A. Death is an appointment that each person must keep and for which no one can be late (Hebrews 9:27).
- B. The only exceptions in the past were Enoch and Elijah (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).
- C. The only exception in the future pertains to those who may be alive at the Second Coming of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

II. During one's life is the time to prepare for death.

- A. Time is limited and opportunities will cease (John 9:4).
- B. Time passes swiftly, even if we are permitted to live long lives (James 4:13-14; Psalm 90:10; Job 14:1-2).
- C. There is no second chance (Hebrews 9:7; Luke 16:19-31).
- D. The true purpose of life on earth is to prepare for the next life (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

III. Riches will not save.

- A. The soul is more important than wealth (Matthew 16:26).
- B. Riches often hinder one's salvation (1 Timothy 6:10; Luke 12:16-21; Matthew 19:16-22).

IV. There will be a separation of the righteous and the unrighteous after death.

- A. **Physical death** is the separation of the soul of man from his body (James 2:26).
- B. **Spiritual death** is the separation of one's soul from the God for eternity (Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Matthew 25:31-46).

V. There is consciousness after death.

- A. The rich man of Luke 16 knew that he was in eternal torment

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(Matthew 25:46).

1. The rich man was in a place of torment for which there was no relief.
2. He was in a fixed place from which he could not escape.
- B. The rich man knew that he could have avoided his pitiful eternity.
 1. He knew it was too late to alter his destiny.
 2. He wished, however, to dissuade his brothers from making the same fatal errors he made.

Conclusion:

1. **No one has to be lost!**
 - a. God desires everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9).
 - b. God gave his Son as a sacrifice so mankind could be saved (2 Corinthians 5:21; John 3:16).
 - c. Abiding in the Gospel (grace and truth) of Jesus Christ will save one's soul (Romans 1:16; John 1:17).
2. Those who cross the threshold of death and find themselves in torment with the rich man do not want their family members to follow them to their doom, too.
 - a. Family religion (i.e., “Good enough for ma & pa, good enough for me”) is woefully inadequate if it is not pure and faithful Christianity.
 - b. From the grave, departed loved ones painfully desire to plead with their families not to follow them to a devil's hell.

Invitation:

1. Only obeying the Gospel will save one's soul and prepare him for eternity (Romans 6:17; Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 12:1-2).
2. **Jesus said** that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16).
3. **Jesus said** that he who is faithful when he dies will receive a crown of everlasting life (Revelation 2:10; John 6:27). 

Louis Rushmore is one of the Editors of this publication as well as a foreign missionary. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Do You Know Church History?

J.C. Choate

● **What is the church?** “[God]... gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body” (Ephesians 1:23).

● **How many heads does a body have?** How many bodies does a head have? “**There is one body**” (Ephesians 4:4).

● **What relationship do Christians have with Christ?** “**Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular**” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

From these questions and biblical answers, we can see that, just as God has only one begotten Son, the Son has only one body, one church, one bride, one kingdom or one family. He is not a monster with many bodies; neither is He a polygamist with many brides. Reading the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation, you will find only ONE BODY. God’s plan for the church was clear; His plan for birth into the family was clear; what He desired in worship to Him was written clearly; the kind of fellowship, work, and life He wanted for the church as a whole and for individual Christians was clear. There are no contradictions about these things in His message to us.

● **If God desired oneness in all of these things, what has happened that there is division everywhere we look among those who claim to be believers in Christ?** Why are there so many churches, teaching so many different doctrines and called by so many different names? Some, involved in the division, hold a make-believe “umbrella” over all the division, saying that all the “believers” make up the “church of Christ.” However, no “umbrella” will hide the division. Either we are “one in Christ Jesus” or we are condemned for creating divisive names and doctrines. God is not deceived.

Satan is the ever-present adversary of God. He tried to thwart the plan for saving man by bringing about the death of Christ. Although, to his surprise, that death itself provided the means for salvation!

So, what was Satan’s next plan? When he realized that he could not prevent Christ from beginning His church, a scheme of confusion was devised. Satan determined to work through men, with their pride, their opinions, their divisiveness and their willingness to please self more than God, and the result

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were division among those who called themselves Christians.

In the first century, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, scolding them for calling themselves after the names of men: ***“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*** (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Are there churches today that are named after the men who started them?

There were other divisions in the first century because of doctrinal differences. Some were members of the Gnostic Church; some were Marcionites; others became Montanists; the Arianists had other doctrinal differences. It has always been a challenge for humans to put God’s will above their own opinions and divisiveness.

There are numerous warnings in the New Testament that an apostasy would come which would take away much of the church (not all of it, because the promise had been made by Christ and through prophecy that the church would never be destroyed, Matthew 16:18; Daniel 2:44). In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, Paul listed some of the errors that would be taught. ***“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats...”***

Out of these doctrinal errors and the elevation of bishops to authority over **areas** instead of leadership over **individual congregations**, apostasy grew to the point that a new church came into existence; the Roman Catholic Church named its first “Pope” in 606.

In 1054, doctrinal differences between the Roman branch and the Orthodox branch of Catholicism became so strong that they divided.

By the mid-1500s, men in Europe rose up against the corruption and error in Romanism, forming “protestant” churches. These came to be

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called after their founders or after some distinct doctrine. Please review the following chart for further information about the denominational groups.

Historically, the Catholic hierarchy branded as heretics those who did not follow their leadership into apostasy. Though the number of Christians and the churches of Christ throughout the world was in the minority, there have been faithful Christians since the beginning of the church in A.D. 33.

In the late 1700s, men in Europe and America said, “A reformation is not enough. We must go back to the Bible and restore among us New Testament Christianity in its purity, to be just what Christians were in the first century and to be members of that one church established by Christ.”

Therefore, dedicated men read the Scriptures, analyzing the differences between what they were reading and the doctrines taught by the denominations of which they were members. They had the honesty to follow the Bible, to be baptized into the body of Christ and to begin congregations of the churches of Christ wherever they lived. We continue to make that same plea. †

ORIGIN OF SOME DENOMINATIONS

Name	Founder	Place	Date
Roman Catholic	Boniface III	Rome	606
Lutheran Church	Martin Luther	Augsburg, Germany	1520
Presbyterian Church	John Calvin	Switzerland	1536
Anglican Church	King Henry VIII	England	1535
Baptist Church	John Smythe	Holland	1607
Methodist Church	John Wesley	London, England	1729
Evangelical Church	Jacob Albright	Pennsylvania, U.S.A.	1803
Mormon Church	Joseph Smith, Jr.	New York, U.S.A.	1830
Seventh Day Adventist	Wm. Miller	Massachusetts, U.S.A.	1830
Jehovah's Witnesses	Charles Russell	Pennsylvania, U.S.A.	1872
Pentecostal Holiness	Group	South Carolina, U.S.A.	1898
Assembly of God	Group	Arkansas, U.S.A.	1914
Christian Church	Group	Kansas City, MO., USA	1906
Community Churches			

J.C. Choate, deceased, was the Founding Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

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What Challenges did the First Century Church Face in Becoming a Potent Force?

Part 1

Jeremy W. Barrier

In the Spring of 2013, I had the opportunity to travel along with several other coworkers to Bangalore, India, where from April 3-5, we participated in an international seminar that dealt with the topic, **Building Up the Church (Body of Christ) into a Potent Force**. Over the course of those three days, I was privileged to speak several times, and this topic (addressed here) was the first one that I was given about which to speak.

Most often, readers of the New Testament are very impressed with how quickly the early church grew from a small, insignificant group in the hills of Palestine to a thriving and growing group with deep and extensive human and financial resources extending to many places throughout the Mediterranean world. In this short article, and the articles that come afterward, I would like to address some of the challenges that the early church encountered and then overcame to be able to grow and grow abundantly. To summarize the contents of these challenges to growth, I will assert that the early church: (1) lacked vision, (2) struggled with local and religious customs and (3) struggled with administration. In this article, I will deal only with this first particular problem, which was the lack of vision that restricted their growth in the early years.

They Lacked Vision

“So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 1:6-8).

In the beginning of the book entitled *The Acts of the Apostles*, the

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author records an encounter between Jesus, the Son of God and His closest disciples just prior to His Ascension back into Heaven. The nature of this conversation is recorded in the quotation above. What is fascinating to me at this point was how poorly the disciples understood Jesus' plan for them! The instruction was that they were to take His message to all of the nations, yet the disciples, similar to many people today, were so engaged in the details of their particular community, church or business that they simply failed to see the broader vision of God's plan for the world and of their role in this plan.

This reminds me of my daughter, who is presently 13 years old. Imagine if I try to help her envision where she will be in a decade from now, and what she will be doing. In 10 years she will develop from a child into a young woman, leaving home, working, traveling and doing so many other things that are quite frankly *unbelievable* for her to even imagine at this age! What a challenge it must have been for the disciples to envision taking the message of Jesus **"to the ends of the earth,"** considering that none of them had ever traveled farther than the borders of Palestine.

This lack of vision by the earliest Christians was not only a lack of vision regarding the geographical limits of the kingdom of God, but they also lacked vision in the ethnic, social and cultural limits to the kingdom of God. Allow me to give a few examples. First, one might continue in Acts and look at the 'visionary problem' that arose in regard to ethnic distinctions. In essence, in the Book of Acts, the church began as primarily a Jewish group of believers who put their trust and faith in Jesus, and then they began expanding throughout Palestine. Of all of these earliest believers, for the most part, none of them were non-Jewish.

What did it mean to be non-Jewish? All of their customs, their language, their eating habits, business partnerships and many other things were very different. Jews celebrated different festivals, worshiped a different God, believed that some foods were not edible, had washing and cleansing customs, ran their own educational institutes, did not participate in many of the civic functions of the city and many other similar cultural details. In essence, the Jews lived very different ethnic and cultural lives.

So, how well did the first Jewish Christians embrace non-Jewish Christians?

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The answer to this question is that many of them lacked the vision to accept these non-Jewish Christians, and this led to problems in the church. The best example of the earliest Christians who initially lacked vision, but gained that cultural vision, is found in Acts 10. There, Peter was compelled by God to go and welcome a non-Jewish believer into the church when God sent him to teach and baptize Cornelius, a Roman centurion. At first, Peter was quite frankly unwilling, and only after a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household was Peter willing to baptize these believers.

To make matters even more interesting, Peter realized that he would have to explain this conversion of Cornelius to the Christians in Jerusalem (his Jewish audience), who would not be so willing to accept others into their ethnic circle! Fortunately, the story ends well, but this is only one story of many that could be recounted in which the earliest Christians had trouble in allowing the different peoples with various ethnic and cultural customs to enter into their community of faith. To put it frankly, they lacked the vision necessary for the church to grow in the way that God designed! ✝

Jeremy Barrier works in foreign missions and also is Head of the Graduate Program at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, USA.



Choose Life!

Steve W. Reeves

Forty-four years ago on January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a ruling in *Roe vs. Wade* that legalized abortion in our country. That ruling has had a greater impact upon the world than any other decision in the court's history.

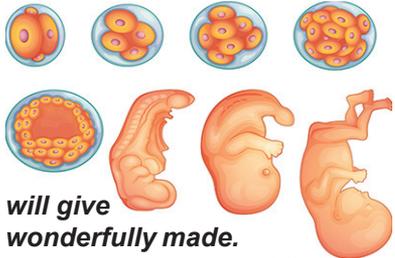
I am unashamedly and wholeheartedly “pro-life.” I hold this view not because of political partisanship but because I believe it is the will of God revealed in the Bible. Since *Roe vs. Wade*, there have been approximately 1,600,000 babies aborted every year in the United States. That's 4,383 per day. We have aborted more babies than the total number of American soldiers killed in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan combined.

How can anyone who values life not be alarmed by these startling facts? Keep in mind that we are talking about more than statistics and numbers. We are talking about individuals who never had the opportunity to experience life on this side of birth. Everyone who respects the message of the Bible should choose life.

EVERY LIFE IS IMPORTANT TO GOD.

Throughout the Book of Psalms, God's role in creating and sustaining life is a consistent theme. In Psalm 22:9-10, the psalmist said, ***“Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb. You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth. You have been my God from my mother's womb.”***

In Psalm 127:3 we read, ***“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.”*** Psalm 139:13-14 states, ***“For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.”***



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In these and many other verses in the Psalms, the creative power of God is praised both for the beauty of nature and the importance of life.

Under the Law of Moses, if a pregnant woman was hit as two men struggled and the baby died, the penalty was death (Exodus 21:22-25). Occasionally someone will ask why the Old Testament contains vivid accounts of bloody battles in which adults and children were slain. The answer is that these people, and those who would have descended from them, lived in blood-thirsty cultures where life was trivialized. Some of them even engaged in infant sacrifice to their pagan gods.

Sadly, our culture has devalued life and become desensitized to the violent act of abortion. Six hundred years before the coming of Christ, Isaiah said, ***“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter”*** (Isaiah 5:20). Is this not the attitude of many people today?

Have we become spiritually blind to the degree that we do not recognize the terrible tragedy that is occurring? We use euphemistic terms such as “terminating a pregnancy” that mask the tragedy of the situation. The greatest impetus for abortion in the United States is called Planned Parenthood. This organization operates under a seemingly benign name, but it was actually founded on the principle of using abortion as a means of birth control.

Abortion advocates do not refer to the baby in its mother’s womb as a child. They often use the term “fetus” without realizing that “fetus” is a Latin word meaning “baby child.” Many people refer to a “fetus” as if it were simply a blob of material that can be carelessly discarded rather than a “baby child” being woven together by the design of God.

The late Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, said, “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

Every human being should be shocked and saddened that in many countries, including the United States, there are stricter laws protecting endangered species, such as the Northern Spotted Owl or the egg of a Bald Eagle, than there are protecting a baby in the womb of its mother!

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EVERY LIFE IS A PLAN OF GOD.

In Jeremiah 1:5 God spoke to Jeremiah: ***“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*** Who is the “I” in this passage? Is it not God? What did God say He had done? Had He not known Jeremiah and appointed him as a prophet before his birth? God had a plan for Jeremiah’s life before he was born.

In Judges 13:5, God told Manoah and his wife of the impending birth of Samson and how he would be used to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Similarly, God told Zachariah and Elizabeth that they would become the parents of one who would prepare the way for the Christ. When Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was carrying him in her womb, she was visited by Mary, the mother of Jesus. When Mary came near, Luke records the baby ***“leaped in his mother’s womb.”*** In this passage, Luke used the same Greek word, “blephos” to refer to an unborn baby as he did in Luke 18:15 when he described those who were bringing their babies to Jesus.

When the Word became flesh, He was formed within the womb of the young virgin named Mary. By today’s standards, Mary would have been a candidate for an abortion. ***She was young, unmarried and poor.*** Aren’t you thankful she heeded the instructions of Gabriel and gave birth to the baby named “Jesus”?

Every life has the potential to accomplish good. A young, unmarried woman once gave birth to a baby boy in Arkansas. Although the country was in the midst of the great depression and the baby’s father had nothing to do with them, the young woman chose to keep the baby, and, with the help of her mother, she began to raise him. When he was still a youth, the mother was killed in a train accident, leaving him to be raised by his impoverished grandmother. The boy worked in cotton fields and strawberry patches to help with expenses. He went on to high school and became an outstanding athlete. After a tour of duty in the United States Army, he enrolled in Harding College. Though he was not a Christian, he was influenced by teachers and students and was soon baptized into Christ. In a short time, he began preaching, and over the next fifty years, he preached in over 1,700

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Gospel meetings. It is estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 people responded to the Gospel preached by **Jimmy Allen**. More than 10,000 were baptized. We shudder to think how many people would have been lost for eternity if a young, single mother had not made the difficult choice to bring her baby into the world.

With over 58 million abortions in the past forty-four years, we must wonder how many lives have been lost that could have made a huge difference in the world. Perhaps someone who would have discovered a cure for cancer? Perhaps someone who would have grown up to be a president? An old proverb says, “Any fool can count the number of seeds in an apple but only God can count the number of apples in a seed.”

EVERY LIFE IS A PRODUCT OF CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES.

None of us are here by “immaculate conception.” Our conception, prenatal development and birth were the result of a plan designed by God when He created male and female (Genesis 1:27). God’s plan gave man the ability to make choices. In Genesis 2, we read how He created Adam and placed him in the Garden with a variety of choices. There were many different trees from which to eat, but there was also one that was to be strictly avoided. The consequence of touching or eating the fruit of that tree was clearly stated. **“for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”** (Genesis 2:17). The man and his wife made a deadly choice. The consequence was stated by Paul in Romans 5:12. **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”**

Though you are free to choose, you are not free to choose the consequences of your choice. You may choose to jump out of an airplane without a parachute. Once you have made that choice you cannot choose the consequences. The sexually immoral choices being made by many

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today have resulted in the rapidly increasing rate of pregnancies among unwed women as well as an alarming increase in sexually transmitted diseases. The large number of abortions is a direct result of such choices. According to Planned Parenthood's own statistics, over 75% of abortions are performed because the mother, father, or both do not want a baby interfering with their lives. In other words, they do not want to live with the consequences of their action.

**EVERY LIFE IS
AN OPPORTUNITY
TO DEMONSTRATE
LOVE.**

Every life provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate love and concern. A young couple was told their unborn baby had a chromosomal disorder and would likely be stillborn. The mother's doctors advised her to have an abortion. She refused and later gave birth to a little baby girl they named "Bailey." This precious child was born blind and deaf. The doctors cautioned her parents that she would not survive long. In spite of the incredible odds, Bailey astounded them all. She became a favorite among her family and friends who loved to hold her and feel her "snuggle" against them. Ladies in the church nursery longed for opportunities to care for her. For three years she provided people with the opportunity to demonstrate unconditional love. Today her picture continues to hang on the wall outside the church nursery. It is a reminder that every person, even when born with difficulties, provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate love.

In Matthew 7:12 Jesus said, ***"In everything, therefore, treat people***

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the same way you want them to treat you.” Should this not apply to the lives of innocent, precious babies within their mother’s wombs?

As Moses spoke his final words to Israel before his death, he said in Deuteronomy 30:19-20, ***“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”***

You and I face similar choices between obedience and disobedience, blessing and cursing, and life and death. My hope is that we will “Choose Life”! 

Steve W. Reeves, Pulpit Minister, West Side Church of Christ, 709 W. Arch Ave., Searcy, Arkansas 72143; (501) 268-2951.

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

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

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

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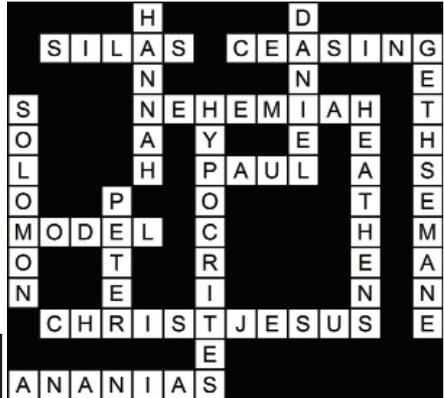
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (Page 38)

1. No.
2. Obedience to God's commandments.
3. False.
4. Price.
5. Because of the present distress.
6. No.
7. No.
8. Would have trouble in the flesh.
9. Things of the Lord.
10. Things of the world, that he may please his wife.
11. Serve the Lord without distraction.
12. No.
13. As long as her husband lives.
14. She is free to marry whom she wishes, only in the Lord.
15. Remain unmarried.

Bible Find (page 42)



Scavenger Hunt (page 81)

Answers:

1. "days when the judges ruled" 1:1
2. Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion 1:2
3. Mara 1:19
4. Boaz 2:1-3
5. an ephah 2:17
6. midnight 3:8
7. 6 ephahs 3:15
8. sandal 4:4
9. Mahlon 4:10
10. Obed, Jesse, David 4:17-22

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

What is an Abortion?

During a **suction abortion procedure**, the doctor or nurse will use a small, hand-held **suction device** or **suction machine** to suck the **pregnancy tissue out** of the uterus. They may also use a small surgical tool called a **curette** to cut and remove any tissue that's left in the uterus, or check to make sure the uterus is totally empty. This type of abortion only takes about 5 to 10 minutes.



How are **dilation** and **extraction** performed? The fetus is rotated and “... a pair of forceps is inserted into the womb to grasp part of the fetus. The teeth of the forceps twist and tear the bones of the unborn child. This process is repeated until the fetus is totally dismembered and removed. Usually the spine must be snapped and the skull crushed in order to remove them.” (from Priests for Life)

Salt Poisoning: a salt solution is injected through the mother's abdomen so as to reach the baby's sac. The baby is not merely **poisoned** when he swallows the solution; rather, **his outer layer of skin is burned off**. The baby will also not die right away, as it usually takes over an hour for him to die.

If such measures were used to drag a reluctant dog from his kennel, PETA would sue for 100 years in prison or the death sentence for the perpetrators.

If these methods were used to execute the worst criminal on death row, angry citizens would rise up in arms against such cruelty. Yet, not only in the USA but throughout the world, this horrific murder of helpless innocent babies takes place by the millions each year, with the consent of the legal systems. Where is the outrage? When will honesty demand that the procedure be called what it is: **the cruel and inhumane murder of millions of humans?**



Let us not deceive ourselves: GOD will demand payment for this evil.