

What Does the Bible Say?

Jerrie Barber

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INTRODUCTION

Some years ago we printed a book in India entitled, **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?**, by Jerrie Barber. It proved to be very popular in that it gave a Bible answer to many of the questions that the readers had.

I contacted brother Barber about providing material for a second volume. In time he did that, and still after another lengthy period, we finally printed, **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?**, Volume 2. This new addition proved to be as much in demand as the first one. With this printing, both volumes have now been printed in the States.

Brother Barber originally prepared this material for a weekly article in Dalton, GA. At the time he was working with Central Church of Christ in that city. Since then he and his family moved to Nashville, TN., where he preached for the West Nashville Heights Church of Christ. Presently he works with the Berry's Chapel Church of Christ in Franklin, TN.

We thank brother Barber for sharing his writings with us and we pray that you will find the answers to your problems in the Bible as the author refers you to the Lord's word in dealing with the many questions asked. If you need further help, in explaining your question and finding a Bible solution to it, please contact us.

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CONTENTS

Understanding the Bible	9
Sorrow, Sorrow	9
What about the Old Testament?	10
Is Sorrow Wrong?	11
Only 144,000?	12
Who is the Devil?	13
Why is the Church Important?	14
Prayers Not Answered	15
Is the Bible God's Word?	16
Before the Mark of the Beast?	16
The Sin Unto Death	17
Four Letter Words	18
"Everything is Changing"	19
Which Comes First?	20
Is it Right to Gamble?	21
How to Fight With Your Spouse	22
How Can the Last be First?	22
Why Do Christians Suffer?	23
Do I Have Anything to Do With It?	24
Where is Headquarters?	25
Where Did Cain Get His Wife?	26
Is it a Sin to Have Money?	27
Judge Not	28
May I Eat Pork?	28
Baptize Babies?	29
Why Did Christ Die?	30
If You Believe the Weather Report, You Will Get in the Cows!	31
Truth Does Exist! — True or False?	32
Did Christ Die for Me?	33
Straight to Heaven?	34
Will the Resurrection be for Everyone?	35
Who's the Greatest?	35
One-Family Rule?	36
How Many Churches?	37
Jesus Was a Baptizer	38
Who Cares About Inspiration?	39

Is Baptism Important?	40
What is Sin?	41
Old Law or New Law?	42
The Right to be Wrong?	43
Help in Marriage	44
Is Jesus God?	44
Is Sincerity the Important Thing?	45
Why Not More Christians?	46
Do I Have a Choice?	47
Contentment	48
Where are the Marriage Vows?	49
What Does it Mean to Preach Christ?	50
How Much Should I Forgive?	51
How Can I Change My Habits?	52
Does "I'M SORRY" Represent Repentance?	52
What Does "Forgive" Mean?	53
Blood or Baptism?	54
Is a Church Raffle Gambling?	55
Sin Against the Holy Spirit?	56
Is Sincerity Enough?	57
Help Our Homes	58
Christ and/or the Church	59
Finding Peace	59
Isn't Love Enough?	60
Why was Jesus Baptized?	61
Is My Body Important?	62
What is Grace?	63
What is Inspiration?	64
Is the Bible Enough?	65
Heart-Felt Religion	65
Capital Punishment	66
Just An Interpretation	67
Can't Be Forgiven?	68
What Am I Worth?	69
A Good Provider?	70
Grace	71
The End of the World!!!	72
Everybody's Doing It!!!	73
Does God Dwell in a Building?	73

How Important is the Church?	74
How Can We Help the Children?	75
Is Divorce the Answer?	76
Better Praying	77
Morality Does Not Save	78
Action or Attitude?	78
It Really Isn't His	79
Who Wrote the Bible?	80
Paul's Opinion?	81
Disobey the Ten Commandments?	82
Does Repentance Mean to Change?	83
Ashamed to Be Ashamed?	84
Why Marry?	85
What is Hell?	85
Living Together Without Marriage	86
Is the Resurrection Important?	87
Preaching Christ	88
Straight to Heaven?	89
Why All Those Names?	90
How Many Resurrections?	91
Are the Miracles Real?	91
Why Be Baptized?	92
In-Law Problems	93
"I am Ready To Quit"	94
Get Angry But Don't Sin	95
I'm Lonely	96
Follow Christ — How?	97
Another Chance?	98
We're Going to Win	99
Can I Live Without Sinning?	100
Fornication — Adultery	100
Don't Quit Fussing!	101
God is Not Guilty!	102
Nobody Understands Me	103
Sincerity Alone?	104
What is Jesus Doing?	105
Help?	105
Is Sin All that Bad?	106
Why Do We have Hypocrites?	107

When Did Jesus Begin?	108
Does it Make Any Difference?	109
Is it a Sin to Be Angry?	109
Overcoming Temptation	110
Ordain a Homosexual?	111
I Believe, But...	112
Is Everything Changing?	113
Tell the Preacher?	114
Did Christ Create?	115
Can I understand?	115
Obey the Law	116
Heaven	117
It's a Mystery	118
What's the Hurry?	119
Does God Hurt People?	120
Does God Want Us Saved or Lost?	121
Can I Make Any Difference?	122
Do I Love the Lord?	123
Divorce Involves Sin	124
Is It Wrong?	125
Earth or Heaven?	125
Hope in the Old Testament	126
How Should I Treat Him?	127
Fear or Love?	128
Shouting	129
Parking and Christianity	130
Should I have My Baby Baptized?	131
I Need Help	131
What About the Thief on the Cross?	132
God Hasn't Answered	133
How to Encourage	134
Did God Know about the New Testament?	135
Does God Remove Names?	136
Who's Going to Heaven?	137
Does God Care About My Body?	138
Will Everybody Live Forever?	138

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Mr. Barber, I enjoy reading my Bible, but a lot of it I don't understand. Does God really expect us to be able to understand it?

All who are concerned about doing God's will have varying degrees of difficulty in understanding the Bible. However, we do need to understand it in order to know and obey the will of God.

God intended for everyone to understand His word. He gave His good news to man in the language of man. God has preserved His word. Although many have tried to destroy the Bible, we still have it available today. Certainly this is not an accident.

God commands us to know His will. *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17). God has never told man to do something that is impossible for him to do.

We should treat the Bible with fairness, patience, and respect. We should allow the Bible to speak for itself instead of taking what someone said about the Bible. This would eliminate many apparent contradictions and many man-made ideas about the Bible.

It is also good to recognize that the Bible contains teaching with different degrees of difficulty. Peter said that Paul wrote some things that are hard to be understood (2 Peter 3:15,16). These things will take more time and study than will some parts of the Bible. Let us continue to study that we may know and do God's will (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11).

SORROW, SORROW

Mr. Barber, What is godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?

The passage you probably have in mind is 2 Corinthians 7:10: *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."*

Notice the results of each. Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation. Worldly sorrow brings death.

There is a kind of sorrow that is not helpful.

How could a person say that he was sorry for a particular thing and yet not change his life? That's what worldly sorrow is. It is a sorrow that does not result in repentance.

A person is sometimes sorry that he is having to suffer the consequence of his sin. Sometimes a person is saying, "I'm sorry I got caught." Then without any attempt at stopping the sinful practice, he proceeds to do it again and again.

This is not pleasing to God. This rebellious attitude is the very opposite of godly sorrow which is the motive for repentance which is necessary for salvation.

Jesus has said, "*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:3). However, repentance is more than just saying, "I'm sorry." John taught, "*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*" (Matthew 3:8).

Repentance is a change of mind brought about by godly sorrow resulting in a change of life. Godly sorrow, then, is sorrow for sin because of what it is, what it has done, what it can do to us, and what it can do to others and to God.

WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have heard that you teach that we should not keep the Old Testament. Is this true? Why don't you keep it like other people do?

I have never heard of anyone who kept the Old Testament. I know of no one who makes three trips each year to Jerusalem to keep the annual feasts. I am not familiar with an individual or group that offers animal sacrifices according to the Old Testament. But this is not the reason that I refrain from keeping the old law.

God had planned, even while the Old Testament was in

effect, to give a new law. It was to be a new covenant where iniquity would be forgiven and sin forgotten (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

When Jesus came, He fulfilled the Old Testament by keeping it perfectly and doing what the prophets said that He would do (Matthew 5:17,18; Acts 3:18).

When Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament, He abolished it, blotted it out, nailed it to the cross (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14).

However, Jesus did not leave us without guidance. He gave us His New Testament (Hebrews 9:15-17). This further illustrates why we do not keep the laws of the Old Testament. When a new will is made, the opening paragraph states that all previous wills are null and void, no longer in effect. This is true of Christ's New Testament (will). We are not under two wills at the same time.

Christ came to be *"the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises"* (Hebrews 8:6). We can be thankful that we live under this new will of Christ.

IS SORROW WRONG?

Mr. Barber, I have just lost a loved one who passed away. I don't know if I will ever get over it. I cry a lot and try not to. I feel bitter and far from God. What can I do?

This is a difficult time when someone close dies.

There are stages of grief that almost everyone experiences: denial, anger, blaming others, guilt, depression, acceptance. It is important to realize that a certain amount of these feelings is normal and is common to most people.

When Jesus' friend, Lazarus, died, his sisters blamed Jesus. Upon meeting Jesus, Martha said, *"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"* (John 11:21). Jesus did not rebuke her for what she thought and said. Later Mary, the other sister, met

Jesus. *"She fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"* (John 11:32).

But notice Jesus' reaction. *"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled"* (John 11:33).

Two verses later we read, *"Jesus wept"* (John 11:35). Is Jesus showing weakness and lack of faith? Were the people disappointed when they saw Jesus express His sorrow? Absolutely not! *"Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!"* (John 11:36).

Feel free to express your feelings to others.

Realize that you will have many different feelings about your loss that are natural.

Remember that Jesus knows how you feel (Hebrews 4:15).

Establish or maintain a right relationship with God and with others.

ONLY 144,000?

Dear Mr. Barber, someone told me that only 144,000 people were going to heaven and that God had already selected them. That means that we cannot go to heaven. What do you think about that?

Let us see what the Bible says about this subject.

We read of this number in Revelation 14. The 144,000 were *"redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins"* (Revelation 14:3,4). These are described as people who have never had physical relations with women. That would mean that Moses, Abraham, and many of the apostles and early Christians could not be in the number because they were married. "But," someone says, "the word virgin is not used in a literal sense. It is a figurative use of the word, meaning a pure Christian." That may be true. Could not the number 144,000 also be a figurative number? Who decided

that 144,000 was literal and virgin was symbolic?

This number is also given in Revelation 7. They were all from the tribes of the children of Israel (Revelation 7:3-8).

Therefore, the 144,000 are Jewish people and no Gentiles will be in Heaven. "Oh, no," someone interrupts, "the term children of Israel is a figurative expression." That is also my understanding. But who decided that the 144,000 was literal and Israel was figurative?

Notice the next verse: "*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb*" (Revelation 7:9). Therefore, we have in heaven 144,000 plus a great multitude which no man could count. How many is that?

WHO IS THE DEVIL?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have always wondered about the devil. Is that really a person or is that just a name that people use to talk about bad things?

Certainly the devil is not as he is often pictured with a red suit, forked tail, and pitch fork. That idea came from man's imagination.

But the devil is a real personality! He is described as a person throughout the Bible. He is powerful, seeking to destroy those who would serve God. "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8).

At first, the devil and his workers often appear very nice and enticing. They sometimes come as apostles of Christ, an angel of light, ministers of righteousness, and wolves in sheep's clothing (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Matthew 7:15).

Characteristics of the devil are given in the Bible.

He is a liar (John 8:44; Acts 5:3).

He is a tempter who is trying to ensnare people in sin (1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:7).

He continually accuses the faithful before God to find fault with them (Job 1:9; Revelation 12:10).

He hinders the work of God (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

But even though the devil is powerful, we can overcome through the help of God. *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

WHY IS THE CHURCH IMPORTANT?

Dear Mr. Barber, I sometimes see people who have no respect for the church. How can we tell others of the importance of churches?

I cannot defend many churches that continue division among those who claim to believe in Christ and who teach doctrines contrary to what God has commanded.

However, we read of the church in the Bible and why it is important.

Christ's church is important because of its builder. Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

The church Christ built is important because of the price it cost. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28).

God's church is important because of its head. Speaking of Christ, we read in Colossians 1:18, *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

The church, the body of Christ, is important because it is made up of saved people. *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23). The church is made up of

the saved because each day God adds the saved to it (Acts 2:47).

The church then is important because of its relationship to Jesus.

PRAYERS NOT ANSWERED

Mr. Barber, God does not always give me what I ask for. Why does God not answer prayers?

Because we do not always get our desires is no indication that God does not answer our prayers. "No" or "Wait" is just as much an answer as, "Yes, you may have what you want."

But there are reasons that God does not answer some prayers.

Some people are not in a praying relationship with God.

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12). Husbands who do not treat their wives with honor will have their prayers hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Selfish prayers are not granted. *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts"* (James 4:3).

Since faith is essential to be pleasing to God and to receive His blessings, a lack of faith weakens our prayers. *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord"* (James 1:6,7).

Praying for things which are contrary to God's will cannot bring the results we ask. *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us"* (John 5:14).

We must forgive others to have God grant our prayers for forgiveness (Matthew 6:14,15).

IS THE BIBLE GOD'S WORD?

Mr. Barber, I know that the Bible is a good and true book. But is it just what some great men wrote or is it really from God?

Your question is basic to our relationship to God. I cannot obey God if I do not know God. I cannot obey God if I do not know God's will. I cannot know God's will if He has not revealed it.

I, along with you, believe that the Bible is a good and true book. However, if the Bible is not from God it is neither good nor true.

Notice these claims the Bible makes about itself. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible claims to be "God-breathed."

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20,21). The Bible is not man's ideas, but men recording God's thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:9-13).

There are evidences outside the Bible to give evidence for its inspiration. These should be considered. However, if we believe it to be good and true, it must also be from God.

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

BEFORE THE MARK OF THE BEAST!

Dear Mr. Barber: I am confused over something, will you please explain? Some people say and believe that Jesus will come for his people that are ready just before the mark of the beast; they say this is the rapture of the Christians and they won't have

to be here to suffer during the mark of the beast. If this is right, will you explain and tell me where I can find it in the Bible?

The word rapture, or the idea of the rapture as it is commonly taught, is not found in the Bible.

The passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 does not refer to what the Lord has in store for His followers in contrast to those who have not followed Him. This scripture talks about what will happen to those who are dead in Christ and those Christians who are alive when Christ comes.

1 Thessalonians 4 is not teaching a rapture which will call Christians away from the earth and bring them back in seven years. *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This passage talks about a one-way trip with the Lord: *"so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

Mr. Barber, What is the sin unto death in 1 John 5:16?

Let us notice 1 John 5:16,17: *"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."*

John, writing to Christians in this letter, says much about sin. *"Sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4).

All people sin. If they try to deny it, they have committed another sin (1 John 1:8,10).

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

We know Jesus and abide in Him when we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3-6).

The child of God has his sins forgiven as he confesses and forsakes them. *"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).

This, then, is the sin not unto death. A sin which one is willing to forsake in repentance will not result in death because Jesus will forgive it.

Therefore, the sin unto death is a sin which a brother (child of God) is unwilling to confess and forsake. This agrees with Hebrews 10:26: *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."*

It has been said that God can forgive any sin, but He will overlook none.

FOUR LETTER WORDS

Mr. Barber, I know a person who uses four lettered words who says he is a Christian. What do you think about someone using four lettered words?

Certainly the Bible teaches that our speech should be pure. *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (Ephesians 4:29). Jesus told us how important our words are: *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"* (Matthew 12:36,37).

Any expression which shows irreverence toward God or His word or which expresses contempt for man should be avoided.

However, some words with four letters are very good and important.

HOPE. *"For we are saved by hope"* (Romans 8:24). *"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"* (Hebrews 6:19).

LIFE. *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us*

eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

LOVE. *"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).*

"EVERYTHING IS CHANGING"

Dear Mr. Barber, The world is in such a mess. Everything is changing. I can't find anything to depend on. Can we really be sure about anything?

You are right that many things are no longer the same. Prices, politics, and even people that we once trusted have sometimes changed since last we were acquainted with them.

However, some things are constant.

When a person steps off a high wall, the direction of movement is always down — never up. The law of gravity has been the same ever since it was impressed into the universe by the Lord.

Water is still made up of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. It has been that way for a long time and is not predicted to change in the near future.

There are also other things on which we can depend.

God does not change. His character remains as it always has been. *"For I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).* We can place our faith in the integrity of God. He will never change.

The promises of God cannot change, because God does not lie. *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18).*

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). When God says it, you and I can believe it!

God's word cannot change. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31). "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:24,25).

WHICH COMES FIRST?

Mr. Barber, In your opinion, is a person saved first and then baptized to join the church or must one be baptized in order to be saved?

Rather than giving my opinion, let us see what the Bible says. I'm sure we realize that before a person can be baptized scripturally, he must have faith (Hebrews 11:6), repent of all sins (Luke 13:3), and confess his faith in Christ (Romans 10:10).

Now what part does baptism play in God's plan of salvation? I only know of five verses where baptism and salvation, or words meaning the same thing, are used. Let us notice them.

Mark 16:16

Which did Jesus place first here, baptism or salvation?

Acts 2:38

Did Peter by inspiration put remission of sins before baptism or baptism before remission of sins?

Acts 22:16

Is baptism or washing away sins first in this verse?

Romans 6:4

Does newness of life come before baptism or does newness of life follow being baptized into the death of Christ?

1 Peter 3:21

What does baptism do?

What does the Bible say?

IS IT RIGHT TO GAMBLE

Mr. Barber, Is it right to gamble to raise money for schools and churches?

The first question we will answer is: "Is it right to gamble?" If it is wrong, then it is wrong for schools and churches. The purpose does not justify a wrong action. For example, would it be right to steal for schools and churches?

To gamble means "to play at any game of chance for stake or risk money, or anything of value, on the outcome of something involving chance." This would include betting on horses or ball games, cake walks, ham shoots, roulette, and playing cards for money or other stakes.

The Bible does not use the word gamble. However, notice these Bible principles.

Trying to get something for nothing is against the teaching of 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "*If any would not work, neither should he eat.*"

The second great commandment is, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matthew 22:39).

The Golden Rule is to treat others as we would like to be treated (Matthew 7:12).

Gambling violates all of these principles.

The word of God tells us to give on the first day of the week as we have been prospered to support the work of God (2 Corinthians 16:1,2). To disregard this teaching is to ignore God's instructions and deprive myself of blessings that come from giving.

HOW TO FIGHT WITH YOUR SPOUSE

Mr. Barber, My wife and I argue a lot. We seem to be getting further apart. How can we stop fussing?

Quit seeing each other.

But I wouldn't recommend that.

It is natural for two people to have disagreements. However, there are some principles to guide our disagreements.

QUIT LYING (Ephesians 4:25). Always be honest about the way you feel. Sometimes after a conflict, a person, when asked what is wrong, will reply, "Nothing," and pout. That's not really true. The problem will never be solved until discussed and solved right.

STAY CAUGHT UP WITH YOUR ARGUING (Ephesians 4:26). As the scripture says, it is alright to be angry. But anger must not be allowed to pile up for weeks and months. The problem will not go away. It will be brought up at the next encounter if it is not finished.

ATTACK THE ISSUE, NOT THE PERSON (Ephesians 4:29). There is a great difference in saying, "I feel disappointed because the yard is not mowed and mother will be here in twenty minutes," and, "You are a lazy bum of a husband and I think you hate my mother."

ACT, DON'T REACT (Ephesians 4:31,32). Bitterness, cutting words, and violent action are always wrong toward my mate. I can choose to be kind and forgiving regardless of what others do to me.

Let me also suggest that you see someone who you trust and who can help. I would be glad to help or refer you to someone else who would offer specific suggestions in your case.

HOW CAN THE LAST BE FIRST?

Mr. Barber, Please explain Matthew 19:30.

Matthew 19:30 states: *"But many that are first shall be last;*

and the last shall be first."

Looking at what was happening and at what Jesus was saying, gives us an idea of what Jesus meant by this statement.

The Rich Young Ruler had just left Jesus, unwilling to obey Him and follow Him. No doubt, he was considered great by many because of his power, age and money. But he would not be great in the eyes of Jesus because of his attitude.

Judas, who was an early follower of Christ, and had been close to the Lord during His ministry, found himself cut off from God's blessings because of his disobedience. Judas was one of the first to follow Jesus, but was last in the end of his life.

Jesus followed this statement with a parable in Matthew 20.

He told of a householder who hired men to work in his vineyard. He sent men to work early in the morning, at the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and finally some went to work at the eleventh hour. They all received the same pay.

Although the men hired at the eleventh hour had only worked one hour, they were rewarded the same as those who had worked all the day. Those who obey the Lord late in life will be blessed. However, this parable is not an encouragement to those who delay their obedience. The eleventh hour workers came as soon as they were called. They were not people who had refused repeated invitations and later accepted the last one.

WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

Dear Mr. Barber, I see many people who serve the devil doing well and many Christians not doing well and even bad. I don't understand why God's people have to suffer like that.

Christians have to suffer many things because we live in a world of cause and effect. The same germs and accidents that cause others disease and pain affect Christians in the same way. Both sunshine and rain come on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

Children of God sometimes suffer financially because they fail to follow good business principles. A person may have been saved, worship God regularly, read the Bible every day, pray often, and serve his fellow man. However, if that same person fails to set proper goals, stay abreast of developments in his trade or profession, and does not give the product or service that is expected in his business, he will suffer. He is not failing because he is a Christian, but he is either consciously or unconsciously ignoring sound business procedures.

Followers of Christ also suffer persecution because they are Christians. *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Timothy 3:12).

I have no choice about the persecution as long as I am faithful, but I do have a choice about my attitude toward it. Jesus said, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven"* (Matthew 5:10-12).

DO I HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT?

Dear Mr. Barber, Since salvation is by God's grace, do I have anything to do with going to heaven?

Certainly we must never forget God's grace. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8,9). God's grace has been extended to everyone (Titus 2:11). However, not everyone is going to be saved. In fact, most are not (Matthew 7:13,14).

God's grace can be received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Therefore, we must respond to and receive God's grace according to His will.

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40).

How did they save themselves? Not by rejecting or by passing God's grace. They received God's grace according to the plan that had been preached to them that day. Peter had said, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). Since they had learned this, how did they respond to the command to save themselves? *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"* (Acts 2:41).

After becoming a Christian, we continue to obey God. *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but how much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12).

WHERE IS HEADQUARTERS?

Dear Mr. Barber, Who are the national officers of your church and where is your headquarters?

Since most denominations have national offices and officers, it is assumed by many that the church of Christ has these same characteristics.

However, the church of which I am a member, the church that Christ built, the church we discover in the Bible, does not have this organization.

Jesus is head of His church. *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:22,23). Since Jesus is the head of His church, the headquarters would be in heaven where Jesus is at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55,56).

The Bible tells us that each congregation in the New Testament had officers who served. The overseers were called bishops, pastors, elders. They are always spoken of as being

plural in number (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). They have authority over and only over the local congregation of which they are members (Acts 20:17,28).

The responsibilities of these men are to shepherd, oversee the congregation, and watch for souls with a view of giving an account (1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:4,5; Hebrews 13:17).

WHERE DID CAIN GET HIS WIFE?

Dear Mr. Barber, I want to ask a question I have often wondered about. If Adam and Eve were the only two people created by God, where did Cain get his wife?

Your question is one that thousands have considered.

First, we do know that Adam and Eve were the only ones created. *"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living"* (Genesis 3:20). Since Eve was the mother of all living, there is no one living who did not come from Eve.

Second, Adam and Eve had other children after Cain and Abel. *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth; And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters"* (Genesis 5:3,4).

Third, from this we know that Cain either married a sister or niece.

Fourth, we do not know which and have no way to find out.

There are many things that God did not reveal in the Bible. This is one of those things.

However, it is interesting and important that the things not revealed have nothing to do with our salvation. Therefore, we concentrate on the things which God has said and that we know we are to do.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those

things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

IS IT A SIN TO HAVE MONEY?

Dear Mr. Barber, Is it a sin to have a little money? Do Christians have to sell everything they have? How can I tell if I have too much?

Your question is one that we all need to consider. In our country, the vast majority are rich compared to the rest the world.

Certainly the Bible speaks about the temptation of money and possessions.

"But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:24).

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Many disciples in the book of Acts sold everything they had. *"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44,45).*

However, this was not a command to every Christian. They did this voluntarily because of the need. Later, Paul writes instructions to those who are rich. He does not tell them to sell what they have. He does tell them not to trust in their riches, to do good, and to share what they have with others (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

JUDGE NOT

Dear Mr. Barber: Please explain Matthew 7:1. Does that mean that we cannot correct anyone for anything?

Matthew 7:1 reads: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

First, let us notice what it does not mean.

The command to judge does not mean that we can't inspect the fruits to see if a teacher is true or false (Matthew 7:6, 15-20).

It doesn't mean that we cannot correct (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19, 20).

It doesn't mean that we cannot tell the difference between right and wrong, truth and error (2 John 9-11; 1 John 4:1; Revelation 2:2; Romans 16:17, 18).

It doesn't mean that we cannot rebuke those in sin (2 Timothy 4:2; Galatians 2:11).

It doesn't mean that the church cannot withdraw fellowship from unfaithful members (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Judge not does mean that we are not to assign destinies (John 5:22). To tell if a person is going to heaven or hell, we would have to know one's heart and we do not know that (1 Samuel 16:7).

It does mean that we are not to be harsh, unkind, unforgiving, and unmerciful. Our attitude is important (Matthew 5:7; Ephesians 4:32; 2 Timothy 2:24).

It does mean that we should not expect of others what we do not expect of ourselves. We must practice what we teach (Romans 2:21-23). Otherwise, we are hypocrites (Matthew 23:2-4).

MAY I EAT PORK?

Dear Mr. Barber: There's one question I would like for you to answer. Should humans eat pork? In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, God describes clean and unclean animals to be and not to be eaten. Since God forgave my sins, I have not eaten

a bite of pork nor bought any. One church member says the old Bible is done away with and that God has cleansed the hog. But I have not found sufficient proof to warrant eating it. I read your column weekly.

Thank you for your interest and question.

God does give laws about clean and unclean meat in Leviticus 11. In Leviticus 12, after a woman has born a child, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering (Leviticus 12:6). Should we keep that law today?

Deuteronomy 14 states what may and may not be eaten. However, Deuteronomy 15 tells of the law of release which was to take place every seven years. *"And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbor, or of his brother; because it is called the Lord's release"* (Deuteronomy 15:2). A man could not collect on a debt during the seventh year. Are we keeping that law today?

No. Christ blotted it out, abolished the old law (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14). We have been delivered, released from the Old Testament law (Romans 7:6,7).

Now, *"every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused"* (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

BAPTIZE BABIES?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have a new baby and I want to do the right thing. Should I baptize my baby? What does the Bible say about it?

I appreciate the fact that you recognize the source for the answer to that question. The Bible is the revealing of God's mind by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). Let's see what God thinks about this question.

First, your baby has no need to be baptized. Baptism is for

the remission (forgiveness) of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism is to wash away sins (Acts 22:16). Your baby does not have any sin. *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"* (Ezekiel 18:20). Since your baby is not old enough to know or choose right from wrong, it cannot commit sin. Therefore it has no sin to be taken away.

Second, your baby cannot be baptized as the Bible teaches. Before one can be baptized, he or she has to believe, have faith. *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). An infant is not old enough to evaluate the evidence and believe.

Repentance precedes baptism. *"Then Peter said unto them. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). But your baby has no sins.

WHY DID CHRIST DIE?

Mr. Barber, I love Jesus and am glad that he was willing to die and give His blood. But why did He die and what did He accomplish by dying?

Your question is at the very center of the message of the Bible.

CHRIST DIED TO TAKE AWAY THE OLD LAW. The old testament was a curse which Jesus took away (Galatians 3:10-14). Christ abolished it in his flesh (Ephesians 2:11-16). He blotted it out (Colossians 2:14).

CHRIST DIED TO SEAL THE NEW TESTAMENT WITH HIS BLOOD (Matthew 26:28). Since He did this, we know that the new testament did not go into effect until after Jesus' death (Hebrews 9:15-17). Also I must obey the new testament to get the benefits of the will, such as remission of sins (Matthew

26:28; Acts 2:38), sins washed away (Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16), continual cleansing (1 John 1:7).

CHRIST DIED TO MAKE POSSIBLE HIS CHURCH. Christ purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28).

CHRIST DIED BECAUSE HE LOVED US. God loved us and showed that by giving His Son for man while man was still in rebellion against Him (Romans 5:6-9; John 3:16). This love and the sacrifice of Christ is available to every person (Hebrews 2:9; Titus 2:11-14). Christ loved us and willingly died for us (John 15:12,14). This is a model for our love and motivation for our service to God.

IF YOU BELIEVE THE WEATHER REPORT, YOU WILL GET IN THE COWS!

Dear Mr. Barber, How can you say that a person must do acts of obedience to be saved when the Bible says in many places that faith saves?

In the Bible when the word faith or belief is used, it includes and demands appropriate obedience unless it is otherwise specified, such as little faith, weak faith, dead faith.

Read Hebrews, chapter 11. Verse six states that it is impossible to please God without faith. To find out what kind of faith God blesses, read what each person did as a result of the faith he or she had in God.

A good illustration of this principle is found in Exodus, chapter nine. Moses came to Pharaoh and said, "*Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die*" (Exodus 9:18,19).

What would a person do who believed this report? We are told in the next verse, "*He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses*" (Exodus 9:20).

And those that didn't believe? "*And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field*" (Exodus 9:21). Those were killed (Exodus 9:25).

And those who believed and didn't obey? There weren't any.

If you believe that kind of weather report, you will get in the cows!

TRUTH DOES EXIST! – TRUE OR FALSE?

Mr. Barber, It seems pointless to me to discuss different questions about the Bible and religion. After all, what is true for you may not be true to me. It's an individual thing, isn't it?

Your question is interesting because one's view of truth is basic to his understanding of other things. Is truth truth whether I know it or not or whether I believe it or not? Does truth apply to all people? Jesus said, "*and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

Consider these things:

The presence of error points to truth. When two people disagree about the number of people in a room, someone is wrong. If it is an improvement to the cause of truth to say that the earth is somewhat spherical in shape, then those who said that it was flat were in error. Either there is error or there is not. If there is no error, then the judgment that there has been error is itself erroneous. Therefore, in any case, there is error.

Truth is timeless and universal. The law of gravity is just as real today as it was in the days of Julius Caesar. It applies just as much in Africa or Asia as it does in America.

Absolute truth is narrow and objective. Select the telephone number of a friend in another state. Dial ten of the eleven digits

correctly, then miss the eleventh by only one or two numbers, and you will be 100% wrong! My believing a number right does not make it right.

God's spiritual truth is revealed in the Bible (John 17:17).

We can know it (Ephesians 5:17). It is complete (2 Timothy 3:16,17). It is exclusive (Galatians 1:6-9). The word is eternal (1 Peter 1:24,25).

DID CHRIST DIE FOR ME ?

Mr. Barber, I want to be a Christian. I know I must be saved by the blood of Christ. But I wonder if Christ died for me. How can I know if I have the blood available for my sins?

Your question is important because there are those who think that Christ only died for a few—those who were chosen to be saved.

But in God's word we find good news!!! The good news is to all people. *"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"* (Luke 3:10). And at the heart of the gospel is the good news about Jesus' death.

Jesus died for the world, not just a few. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

Jesus died for all. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1 Timothy 2:5,6). For this cause Paul wrote just before this statement that God *"Wants all men to be saved"* (1 Timothy 2:4).

Jesus died for every man. *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"* (Hebrews 2:9).

Yes, Jesus died for you. His blood is available. He is the provider of salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8,9).

STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN?

Dear Mr. Barber, Do people go straight to heaven or hell at death? If they do, do they leave heaven or hell to go to the judgment and then go back where they were?

We often hear people speak and sing about loved ones being in heaven. Let us see what the Bible says.

In Luke 16, we are permitted to get a brief view of life after death. The rich man is said to be lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torment (Luke 16:23). The word for hell here is hades or the unseen state. The word for eternal hell is gehenna. Lazarus was seen in Abraham's bosom, not heaven (Luke 16:22).

When Jesus spoke to the thief on the cross, He said, "*Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). Where did Jesus go that day? It was not to heaven. Peter quotes a Psalm of David which foretold of Christ and states, "*He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption*" (Acts 2:31). Again the word used for hell in this passage is the word hades, or the unseen place. Christ went to a place of departed spirits and the thief accompanied him.

This is what the writer of Ecclesiastes said about death, "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

No. People do not go directly to heaven or hell. The body goes to the grave. The spirit goes to a place God has prepared to await judgment. "*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*" (2 Peter 2:9).

WILL THE RESURRECTION BE FOR EVERYONE?

Mr. Barber, I have read about the resurrection, but I still have questions about it. Will just the people who are going to heaven be raised or everyone? Will the body be raised?

Everyone who has died will be raised. Jesus said, "*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*" (John 5:28,29). Paul agreed with this idea when he stated that "*there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*" (Acts 24:25).

The body will be raised. Resurrect means "to raise from the dead." Therefore, whatever has been dead will be that which will be raised. "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (James 2:26). Certainly there will be a change in the body, but the body will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:50-54). The resurrected body will be like Jesus' body (Luke 24:39).

Those who are alive when Jesus comes will be changed. "*Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*" (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

The resurrection gives us great hope. Let us be prepared for the resurrection of the just unto life! "*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

WHO'S THE GREATEST?

Mr. Barber, Does the Bible tell which race or group of people are most blessed by God or who he favors?

No. In fact we are taught that God has *“made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth”* (Acts 17:26). Since God made all men, He is no respecter of persons, that is, God does not judge men according to outward appearance.

God is no respecter of persons according to race. *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”* (Acts 10:34,35). *“For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7).

God is no respecter of persons according to worldly position. *“And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him”* (Ephesians 6:9).

God will not be a respecter of persons in judgment. *“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons”* (Colossians 3:25). *“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear”* (1 Peter 1:17).

Therefore, we should try to eliminate prejudice from our lives. *“But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors”* (James 2:9).

ONE-FAMILY RULE?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have been told that only one particular family is supposed to rule the church. But I have read my Bible and haven’t been able to find this. Is this taught in the Bible? If so, where is it?

No, the Bible does not teach that a certain family is to rule the church that Jesus purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). Of

course, when a man or men set up a church, they usually rule it the way they want, but they do not have the approval of God.

Jesus is the Head of His church. *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). Therefore, no man or group of men have a right to change anything that Jesus has spoken.

The Lord has taught in the Bible that qualified men are to oversee each congregation. *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"* (Hebrews 13:17).

Who are these that are to rule? *"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine"* (1 Timothy 5:17). These elders are also known in the Bible as pastors, bishops and overseers. (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4). They are always spoken of as being plural in number (Acts 14:23). We never read of a pastor over a church. Their qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. You will notice that it says, *"If any be blameless... etc."*, not just from a certain family.

HOW MANY CHURCHES?

Dear Mr. Barber, I get confused reading about the church. Sometimes I read about only one church and then there are the seven churches of Asia. Which way is it?

The word church is used in two ways in the New Testament.

First, it is used in the singular when referring to the universal nature of the church. Christ promised to build only one church. *"And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

Second, the word church is used in the plural when the

disciples meeting together in different localities are being discussed. The seven churches of Asia were congregations meeting in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Revelation 1:11). Paul wrote a letter to *"the churches of Galatia"* (Galatians 1:2). But these were not different denominations. They were not teaching conflicting doctrines.

Different people were meeting in different places worshipping and serving God. An individual congregation is addressed by Paul and the church of God which is at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2). More than one congregation would be described with the word churches. *"The churches of Christ salute you"* (Romans 16:16).

As to the number of different churches, teaching conflicting doctrines, that did not exist in the days of Christ and the apostles. The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23). Christ had and has only one body (Ephesians 4:4). The church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22,23). Christ had and has only one bride.

JESUS WAS A BAPTIZER

Mr. Barber, I have heard that Jesus baptized some people when He preached, but I can't find it in my Bible. Did He ever baptize anybody?

Yes He did. In fact, Jesus baptized more people than John. And that would have been a great number because it is said of John, *"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins"* (Matthew 3:5,6).

But Jesus also baptized. *"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized"* (John 3:22).

Later, we read a comment from John's disciples. *"And they*

came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him" (John 3:26). They were impressed with the number of people following Jesus.

The next chapter relates additional information about this subject. *"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more than John (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee"* (John 4:1,2).

This is certainly an interesting, but little discussed fact about the ministry of Jesus. Jesus and John were both preaching the same message: *"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17).

WHO CARES ABOUT INSPIRATION?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have heard different ideas about the Bible. Some say that it is the very words of God. Others say that it is one of the best books ever written with high moral teaching, but was written by men telling of their relationship to God.

I, too, have encountered different ideas about the Bible. One man said essentially this: *"The New Testament is not a law book but a very vague description of a church that existed 2,000 years ago. The Bible was written to that age; what we do after that is a matter of judgment."*

However, the issue is whether the Bible is to be regarded as a trustworthy teacher of doctrine.

The question is, Shall we listen to God or to man? If the Bible is the word of God, we are listening to God when we follow its teaching. If the Bible is the word of God, we are listening to man when we reject its teaching.

When the Bible tells us clearly what kind of book it is, are we to reject its testimony as unworthy of belief? Will we believe the Bible when it tells good moral lessons and not believe it when it

tells us about its origin?

What kind of message does the Bible claim to be? *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue”* (2 Samuel 23:2).

Since the Bible claims to be the very word of God, shall we reject this teaching and accept another?

IS BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know that the Bible teaches that a person should be baptized. But is it really all that important or is it just a personal preference as to whether and how you do it?

Let us ask and answer some related questions.

Is it important to obey Jesus? *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:8,9). To whom is Jesus the author of salvation?

How much of Jesus' will does He command us to obey? *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:20). How much of Jesus' will should I want to obey?

What did Jesus say about baptism? *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15,16). Did Jesus place baptism before or after?

Since Jesus placed baptism, along with faith (John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3), and confession (Matthew 10:32,33), as a part of our obedience in accepting salvation, who will I be

following if I obey all of Jesus' will? Who will I be pleasing if I decide to leave off some of His will or do it my own way? How many ways are there to heaven? "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6).

Now Jesus has a question: "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). Shall I obey Jesus or do my own thing? — that's my basic decision!!!

WHAT IS SIN?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know many things are wrong. But how can I be sure what is sin?

Your question is a vital one today. Many think sin is whatever brings unpleasant results, or that which is unlawful, or what most people think is wrong. But these things are not the standard.

The very basis for right and wrong is the fact of the existence of God. Since there is a God who created us, holds us responsible for our actions, and will judge us, His word, the Bible, defines sin and tells us how to overcome it.

Sin is doing what God tells us not to do. "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4). God has told us not to commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, covet (1 Corinthians 13:9). When a person does an act or holds an attitude which God has forbidden, that person has sinned.

Sin is not doing what God tells us to do. "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17). God has commanded us to do certain things, such as believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3), confess Jesus (Romans 10:10), be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), be faithful (Revelation 2:10), assemble with Christians to worship God and encourage each other (Hebrews

10:25), do good to others (Galatians 6:10). To willfully fail to do these things is sin.

Sin is violating our conscience (Romans 14:23). When a person proceeds to do an action which he doubts to be right, he is showing his willingness to sin.

OLD LAW OR NEW LAW?

Dear Mr. Barber, Are we still under the old law and the ten commandments or are we under the new law of Christ or both?

This question is most important for our understanding of our relationship to God today.

God promised a new covenant after the giving of the ten commandments. *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"* (Jeremiah 31:31).

We are told that the old law was taken away by Christ. He abolished the law of commandments (Ephesians 2:15). He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, took it out of the way, nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). What was the handwriting of ordinances? What was the only law written with the finger of God? This question is answered in Deuteronomy 4:13 and Deuteronomy 9:10.

The law was added because of transgressions until the seed should come (Galatians 3:19). The seed was Christ and He has come (Galatians 3:16).

The law was our schoolmaster to bring men to Christ that man might be justified by faith. *"But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster"* (Galatians 3:23,24).

We cannot be under two laws at the same time. If a person should do this, Paul compares his condition to adultery (Romans 7:1-4).

Therefore, we see that the first law or covenant, the old testament, has been taken away, that the new covenant, the law

of Christ might guide us today (Hebrews 8:6-8; Hebrews 9:15-17; Hebrews 10:9; Galatians 6:2).

THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG?

Dear Mr. Barber, I am so thankful that we live in a country where we can have any belief that we want to. Since we do, why do some people always want to change the way others believe? Why doesn't everyone just believe what they want to and leave everybody else alone?

I, too, am thankful to live where we enjoy the freedom of religion. However, just because a type of religion is legal does not mean that it is pleasing in the sight of God! Atheism is legal but it is not pleasing to God! *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

As we are being thankful for the freedom of religion, let us remember that a certain idea or belief may be legally right but religiously wrong! Let us ever seek to believe, practice, and teach truth to others — not just religion! Notice these biblical statements.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

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

HELP IN MARRIAGE

Mr. Barber, I am soon to be married. What can I do to make it work? What suggestions do you have?

In one word: LOVE.

This is a word that is used frequently, but understood rarely.

Someone said, "Love is a feeling that you feel when you feel that you're going to get a feeling that you never felt before." But that is not love!!! Love is a decision, choice, commitment to treat another person as you would like to be treated.

Decide to love your marriage partner. Choose to have the characteristics of love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Replace the word love with the personal pronoun I indicating your determination to practice love in your relationship. And here is your commitment:

I will be patient.

I will be kind and will not envy my spouse.

I will not be boastful, nor conceited, nor rude.

I will not be selfish, demanding what I want when I want it.

I will not be quick to take offense, wearing my feelings on my sleeve.

I will not keep a score of the wrongs committed against me, reminding my partner of how many times he has done this or how many times he has failed to do that.

I will not laugh and be glad when he makes a mistake, but rather be proud when he does well.

I will face whatever comes our way with faith and hope.

I choose to be committed to him for life.

IS JESUS GOD?

Mr. Barber, Is Jesus and the Holy Ghost God or are they just God's helpers?

The question you ask is important because it relates to the nature of God. It is difficult to understand because we read about the one God and yet there are three distinct persons in the Godhead or God-family. The word Godhead is used three times in the King James version of the Bible: Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9. The meaning is "that which is divine", "divinity", "the divine nature." The words Godhood and manhood are used in a similar way. Manhood is that which distinguishes man from all other living creatures on earth. Godhood indicates the divine characteristics which distinguishes God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit from all other beings in the universe.

Notice these points about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God. *"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ...thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God"* (Acts 5:4,5).

Jesus is God. When Thomas saw the nailprints in Jesus' hands and the speared side of Jesus, he said, *"My Lord and my God"* (John 20:28). Also notice the statement of the Father, recorded in Hebrews 1:8: *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom."*

The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all three part of the Godhead, God-family.

IS SINCERITY THE IMPORTANT THING?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know we should study the Bible and try to find out what is right, but isn't sincerity the real important thing?

Sincerity certainly is important. A person who isn't sincere isn't honest. Without this part of one's character, one cannot be saved.

However, sincerity alone has never brought man into a right relationship with God. Man alone cannot find his way spiritually. *"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23). *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 16:25).

Naaman was not healed of leprosy as long as he was doing what he thought should be done. He had to obey the words of the prophet (2 Kings 5:1-14).

Paul was sincere in persecuting Christians. *"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"* (Acts 23:1). *"I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"* (Acts 26:9).

Although sincerity is important, truth must be obeyed. *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31,32).

Some at the judgment will be religious, sincere, and LOST!!! (Matthew 7:21-23).

WHY NOT MORE CHRISTIANS?

Mr. Barber, I just don't understand why everyone doesn't want to serve God. Why are many people not interested in being Christians?

When a person knows the joy and peace of mind that comes from being a servant of Christ, it is hard to understand why everyone would not want the blessing that Christ has to offer.

But there are some reasons why people fail to submit to the will of Christ.

False teachers lead many away from the truth. We are warned of this in the Bible. *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among*

you, who privitly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

The passing pleasures of sin entrap others. To deny that sin is fun would be to lie. However, the pleasure of sin is only for a short time (Hebrews 11:24,25). This short time of pleasure attracts many away from God. *"He also that received seed among thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).*

Delay keeps people out of the body of Christ. I could not name the people that I have talked with about their souls who knew the will of God and planned to do it some day, but not yet. But God's word on the right time is always today (2 Corinthians 6:2).

DO I HAVE A CHOICE?

Mr. Barber, I have been told that God had already planned our destiny. If this is true, then I don't have a choice of being saved or lost, so what can I do?

You are correct. If God has already chosen your destiny, you do not have a choice about your salvation.

However, we are told that we must give an account to God. *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).* But if a person is to be held accountable, he or she must be given the freedom to make choices. If a person did not have that freedom, he would not be responsible.

Over and over in the Bible we are reminded that God has given man a choice about serving God. Joshua reminded the people, *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers*

served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). He told the people to make a choice and he told them his decision. He had the freedom to decide!

Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:13,14: *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* Would Jesus tell us to make a choice when we had no choice between life and destruction?

CONTENTMENT

Dear Mr. Barber, I would really like to be happy, but I had an unhappy childhood and my surroundings now are not all pleasant. How can I change my situation?

I do not know what your situation is, but I would be glad to talk to you about it.

Notice a verse that Paul wrote. *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Philippians 4:11). Note: Paul learned to be content. He was not born that way. He was an old man, in bad health, in prison. He had learned to be content without his youth, health, the approval of the crowd, or freedom.

How did Paul and how can you find contentment? It is not by looking for it.

He found an interest outside himself. *"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). Christ was showing His love for others through Paul.

A Christian has certainty about how life is going to turn out. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that*

love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Our love for God is seen in our obedience to Him (1 John 5:3).

Paul knew God would give him everything he needed. *"But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). With this same faith, we can find the same contentment.

WHERE ARE THE MARRIAGE VOWS?

Mr. Barber, I have been looking in the Bible for the vows that are said at weddings and have not been able to find them. Where are the vows found?

The marriage vows are not found in the Bible.

However, this does not mean that God is not concerned about marriage and the home. He certainly is.

God literally created the first home by creating man and then making woman to be a helper suitable for the man (Genesis 2:18-24).

God gives His approval for marriage in the Bible. *"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled"* (Hebrews 13:4). *"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord"* (Proverbs 18:22).

Although the vows for weddings are not found in the Bible word for word, the principles for the ones that I use in a ceremony and others that I have heard are found in God's word.

The fact that the marriage commitment is to remain constant, regardless of circumstances: *"for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health; in adversity and prosperity"* is found in the Bible. The inspired definition tells us that *"love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth"* (1 Corinthians 13:7,8).

The permanence of the marriage relationship is stated in the

phrase *"till death do us part."* The Bible says, *"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth"* (Romans 7:2).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PREACH CHRIST?

Dear Mr. Barber, Why don't you preachers just preach Christ and leave everything else alone? It's all these other doctrines that people disagree on. Why talk about anything else?

Certainly Christ needs to be central in the gospel message. Paul said, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified"* (1 Corinthians 2:2).

But what does it mean to preach Christ? Do we just discuss His birth, life, and death? Should Old Testament prophecies that point to Him be read? Should we teach the truth that the Holy Spirit revealed from Jesus and about Jesus? (John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13).

Let's see what one man did when he preached Christ. *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them"* (Acts 8:5).

What did he preach? *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women"* (Acts 8:13).

To preach Christ, we must preach the kingdom, His church.

To fail to do this would be to preach the head without the body (Ephesians 1:22,23).

To preach Christ, His name or authority must be taught. To leave this off, the fact that He is our Lord would be overlooked and salvation would be omitted. *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

To preach Christ, baptism must be commanded. When this is ignored, men do not know when and where the death of Christ is contacted (Romans 6:3,4).

HOW MUCH SHOULD I FORGIVE?

Dear Mr. Barber, Please write something in the paper about forgiveness. I know I am to forgive those who ask me, but how much and what does that mean exactly?

The basic meaning of forgiveness is "treating sins as if they had never been committed."

Jesus taught a parable about forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35. Notice what He said in verse 35: "*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*"

We are to forgive:

EVERYONE. This would include friends, family, fellow workers, and even our enemies. Jesus prayed, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34) for those killing Him.

EVERYTHING. We are to forgive others as much as we want God to forgive us.

EVERY TIME. Jesus told Peter about the number of times to forgive a brother: "*I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven*" (Matthew 18:22). As to the frequency, notice Luke 17:4: "*And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him.*"

FROM THE HEART. Treating a sin as if it had never been committed means not holding a grudge. When the hatchet is buried, don't leave the handle sticking out.

OR ELSE. My salvation is dependent upon my forgiveness of others (Matthew 6:14,15). "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*"

HOW CAN I CHANGE MY HABITS?

Mr. Barber, I have some habits that hurt me and I don't like for my children to see me do them. But I have tried and haven't been able to change. What can I do?

I have two suggestions: change your thinking and replace your old, undesirable habits with new, good habits.

A psychologist, William James, said, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind."

Mr. James did not invent that idea.

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:34,35).

To change our lives, we must change our minds or thinking. *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:2).

Then, replace bad habits with good habits. If you have been serving the devil, serve God. If you have a habit of criticizing, condemning, and complaining, replace that with deliberately complimenting at least three people each day.

DOES SAYING "I'M SORRY" REPRESENT REPENTANCE?

Dear Mr. Barber, Does repentance mean just saying I'm sorry and nothing else? Or is there more to it?

No. True repentance is "a change of mind, brought about by

godly sorrow, resulting in a change of life." Unless there is a change in life, repentance has not taken place.

Notice these Bible examples:

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7,8). John taught that repentance had a result.

"And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious acts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:18,19). The repentance of these people brought about a book burning.

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went" (Matthew 21:28,29). Repentance for this son meant doing what he had previously said that he would not do, that is, the will of his father.

Repentance for the prodigal son meant leaving the hog pen, going home to his father, confessing his sins, and living as a son again (Luke 15:11-24).

WHAT DOES "FORGIVE" MEAN?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know that the Bible says that God will forgive sins. What does that mean? I've been pretty wicked. I don't know if God could forgive all that I have done or not.

The answer to your question is part of the good news in God's word. Notice what the Bible says about sins when they are forgiven:

God forgets (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Sins are remitted, forgiven, which means "Letting them go,

as if they had not been committed; pardon; cancellation of an obligation, a punishment, or guilt" (Acts 2:38; Acts 5:31).

God blots out sins at conversion (Acts 3:19).

Those who obey have their sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

God's children are dead to sin and freed from sin (Romans 6:2,7).

The body of sin is destroyed (Romans 6:6).

Those who are being forgiven are being cleansed from sin (1 John 1:7).

God removes our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

In Acts chapter two, we read of those who crucified Jesus hearing Peter preach and tell them of their sin. They asked, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:38). God can forgive you too!

BLOOD OR BAPTISM?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know that you teach that a person ought to be baptized and I believe that too. But the Bible teaches that we are saved by the blood of Jesus. I don't see how we can be saved by both blood and baptism. How do you explain that?

You are correct that the blood of Jesus is the price that was paid for the forgiveness of our sins. We also need to ask, "When is this blood applied?"

What purges our conscience? The blood of Christ! (Hebrews 9:14). When do we come in contact with the blood? *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:21).

What washes us from our sins? The blood of Jesus Christ! *"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood"* (Revelation 1:5). When does this washing take place? *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Act 22:16).

What price was paid for the remission of our sins? The blood of Jesus! *"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:28). When do we receive the remission? *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Act 2:38).

Christ's blood saves us. We are baptized into His death where His blood was shed (Romans 6:3,4).

IS A CHURCH RAFFLE GAMBLING?

Mr. Barber, When a church sells chances on something, is this gambling?

Gambling is defined as "gaming or playing for money: the betting on the result of a game; the playing of a chance or skill for stakes."

Any time a person invests something of value in a game of chance, gambling is involved. This would include betting on horse races, poker, roulette and other professional gambling operations, bets on ball games, elections or other events, bingo parties where bets are made, raffles, cake walks, many carnival games, matching for cokes or money, and many other chance games. The difference in betting on a horse race and in a raffle is in the amount of money spent, not in what is being done. It is gambling in both cases.

But is gambling wrong? The word gamble is not used in the Bible. Consider these principles:

The Bible view of work does not allow the "something for

nothing" philosophy of gambling (2 Thessalonians 3:10; Ephesians 4:28).

I cannot love my neighbor and take his money in gambling (Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:10).

I could not practice the golden rule in gambling (Matthew 7:12).

The fact that the gambling operation might be for a good cause does not justify a thing that is wrong. I see an inconsistency in an organization that is trying to help people live better lives promoting even in a small way something that is an evil in our society.

SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Dear Mr. Barber, Can people sin against the Holy Ghost today? If so, how can this be done?

Yes. It is possible to sin against the Holy Ghost. The Pharisees sinned against the Spirit of God by giving the credit for the miracles of Jesus to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (Matthew 12:22-32).

Let us notice some other ways that people can sin against the Holy Ghost.

Resist. Stephen's audience resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51-53). Men today can resist the Spirit by rejecting the word of God which has been inspired by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21).

Lie. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3, 4). When a person deliberately fails to keep a promise to God, he has lied to Him.

Defile the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 3:16,17 speaks of the church being the temple. It can be defiled by false teaching or ungodly living. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 teaches that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Fornication or doing something to harm one's body would be a sin against the Holy Ghost.

Despise, insult. Willful sin insults the Spirit of God (Hebrews 10:26-29). Choosing not to worship God with other Christians is one of the sins included (Hebrews 10:25).

Grieve. God's Spirit is grieved when His people lie, compromise with the devil, steal, sin with foul speech, or display wrong attitudes (Ephesians 4:25-31).

IS SINCERITY ENOUGH?

Mr. Barber, I know it is good to know the Bible and to understand and do the will of God right. But isn't the important thing to be sincere? Does it really make any difference what we do as long as we are religious and sincere?

Certainly sincerity is important. Paul wrote, *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ"* (Philippians 1:9,10).

However, being sincere about doing the wrong thing will not bring blessing. A few years ago, two friends were working on a car. A small fire started under the car. The man under the car called to his friend to throw some water on the fire to put it out. Two five-gallon cans were sitting beside the car. One contained water, the other contained gasoline. The man beside the car sincerely but mistakenly thought he was throwing water on the fire. It was gasoline. His friend was badly burned!!! His sincerity did not remove the pain.

Saul of Tarsus sincerely thought that persecuting the church of Christ was the right thing to do. *"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"* (Acts 23:1). Later, he said, *"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of*

Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). But what he was doing was sin (1 Timothy 1:15). He needed to have those sins forgiven (Acts 22:16).

HELP OUR HOMES

Mr. Barber, I am very concerned at the homes that are breaking up. Why is this happening so much?

This is a topic that touches everyone. We see the problem all about us. There are some obvious reasons that people fail in marriage such as drunkenness and adultery. But I would like to mention some reasons that many "good" homes dissolve.

Sometimes a husband or wife will sacrifice their home for a child. In some homes, rather than strengthening the relationship, a child becomes the focal point while the husband-wife bond becomes weaker and weaker. Certainly the proper attention should be given to the children in the home. But the mother and father cannot ignore their responsibilities to each other for the twenty to thirty years that they are raising children and expect to have a strong, happy home when the children are gone! Parenthood is temporary and may take less than one-half of the married life. Marriage is permanent.

Some married people substitute wishful thinking for work in the home. Too many still have a fairy book idea of marriage. Those having a desire to have a good home should ask some questions. Have you read and applied these scriptures: Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-20; 1 Peter 3:1-7? How many good books have you read on marriage? If you are having problems, have you discussed this with an objective person? Too many times the wife tells the husband's faults to a "friend" and the husband does likewise. The "friend" takes sides with the one complaining, says, "Ain't it awful," and the problem is bigger. There are people who will listen and give constructive suggestions for help. I have never seen marriage fail where both partners really wanted to make it work!

CHRIST AND/OR THE CHURCH?

Mr. Barber, Is it really necessary to be concerned about the church? Why not just preach Christ and leave the church alone? After all, Christ is what is really important.

Christ certainly is central to the message of salvation. Therefore, I would not want to give more importance to the church than Christ does. However, the church is very close to Christ as can be seen by His connection to it.

Christ is the Builder of His church. Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

Christ is the Foundation of His church. What is this rock upon which the church is built? *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Christ bought His church with His blood. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28).

Christ is the Head of His church. *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18).

Christ is the Savior of His church. *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23).

I cannot love Christ (the head) without being concerned and connected with His church (His body).

FINDING PEACE

Mr. Barber, I have a friend who is upset over a number of things happening in her life. I would like to be able to help and encourage. Do you have any suggestions?

I hope your friend trusts in God for He certainly has the answers to our problems. Since I do not know the nature of the upsetting things, I cannot be specific in my suggestion. However, there are some principles in Philippians 4 that will help.

Prayer accompanied by faith. God has promised His peace which passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds when we pray to Him (Philippians 4:6,7). Worry is eliminated when we know we are doing God's will and ask Him to bless us and our problems and know that He will.

The attitude of gratitude. Thanks giving should not be a day but a way of life for the Christian. Happiness comes more from wanting what you have than from having what you want. Many people live a miserable life because they are never thankful for their blessings.

Control your thoughts. The thoughts that we dwell upon should be selected by the guidelines in Philippians 4:8. We may not be what we think we are, but we are what we think!

Learn to be content (Philippians 4:11,12). This is a learned attitude. Some situations cannot be changed. We have to learn to make the most of those circumstances.

Let Christ work through you (Philippians 4:13). When we help others, our problems seem smaller.

Trust in God's provision. God will supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19).

ISN'T LOVE ENOUGH?

Dear Mr. Barber, Don't we get hung up too much on doing the commands of God? The way I read the Bible is that love is the main thing.

Love is essential. "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On

these two commandments hang all the law and prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

What does Jesus tell us about this love? *"If ye love me, keep my commandments... If a man love me, he will keep my words"* (John 14:15,23). *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"* (1 John 5:3). When I love God, that will be seen in the way that I obey God. When I say that I love God and do not obey Him, God has a reason to doubt what I say.

But what about the second command, to love our neighbor? *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments"* (1 John 5:2). *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* (1 John 3:17,18). The only way I can know what is ultimately and eternally good for my neighbor is to follow God's will in dealing with him. Love will obey God's commands — both in relationship to God and to others.

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know that many people say that we should be baptized to wash away our sins. If that is true, why was Jesus baptized?

The Bible does teach that baptism is to wash away sins (Acts 22:16). People were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism has a part in our salvation (1 Peter 3:21).

However, Jesus did not have these needs. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). *"For he hath made him to be sin for*

us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Why then was Jesus baptized? When John asked why He came for baptism, Jesus answered, *"Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* What is righteousness? *"My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172).* Obeying the commands of God is His righteousness. This was the purpose of Jesus in coming from heaven. *"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).*

Jesus was baptized to obey His Father and to leave us an example of obedience, which is essential to our salvation. *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9).*

IS MY BODY IMPORTANT?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know some things are not good for our health, and hurt our bodies. But isn't really the important thing our souls? Isn't that what God is really interested in? What do you think?

I know what the most important thing is because God has told you and me in His word. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).* Let us see what God has said and commanded concerning our bodies.

Our bodies belong to God. *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).*

Our bodies are to be presented to God. *"I beseech you there-*

fore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Whatever I do to or with my body should glorify God.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Christ is to be magnified in my body. *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or death" (Philippians 1:20).* The only influence I have is my body and its actions. People can't see my spirit!

God tells me my body is important!

WHAT IS GRACE?

Mr. Barber, I hear people talking about God's grace. I know it is a good thing and I need it, but I really don't understand what it means. Please explain.

You are correct that God's grace is a good thing. It is essential for our salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9). We should also be thankful that God has made His grace available to everyone. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).*

Now let us look at the definition of grace. Grace is "unmerited favor; that which we need, but do not deserve."

Perhaps an example will help. In the book of 2 Samuel, we read of David, the king of Israel, committing the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. After at least two attempts to cover the sin, David had Uriah, her husband, killed. David had been guilty of the sins of adultery and murder.

According to the law of God and David's own admission, he deserved to die (2 Samuel 12:5-7). But he did not die for these sins. *"And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy*

sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12:13). David later wrote, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*" (Psalm 32:1). David received grace — that which we need, but do not deserve.

Let us love and appreciate God's grace and not receive it in vain. It will be in vain for us if we reject or neglect God's will for us (2 Corinthians 6:1,2; Acts 20:32).

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

Mr. Barber, Recently I heard a discussion of the inspiration of the Bible. Exactly what does that mean? How important is it whether the Bible is inspired or not?

The clearest statement on what is meant by inspiration that I know is this: God the Holy Spirit so guided the writers of the Bible that we have in the Bible the will of God without error or omission.

That is a statement that I have given on inspiration. Is it a true statement? Does the Bible even claim to be the word of God given to man? Let us notice some passages.

David said, "*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*" (2 Samuel 23:2). It is stated that God was speaking through David.

Further stated in Acts 1:16, "*Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.*" Peter says that the Holy Ghost was speaking, using David's mouth as His instrument.

Paul wrote, "*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul understood that he was writing what the Lord wanted written. The commands were coming from the Lord Himself.

The issue of inspiration is eternally important. If the Bible is God's word, I am rejecting God if I choose not to do it. If it is only man's word, there is no power for salvation.

IS THE BIBLE ENOUGH?

Mr. Barber, I know the Bible has a lot of good things and we ought to read it, but don't we need some other readings and helps to know God's will in our lives?

I know we want to see what the Bible has to say about this. Certainly if God through His word, the Bible, has indicated that we will need something else, we need to know what it is and obtain it.

We are told that *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). If scripture, the Bible, furnished us to all good works, how many other things must we do to please God other than what we have recorded in the Bible?

In James 1:25, God's word is called the "perfect law of liberty." The word perfect means, "complete, without any parts missing." Since it is complete, with nothing missing, what other information would we need to complete our knowledge of God's will?

Peter wrote to Christians, *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."* We are told that God had already given all things that pertain to life and godliness. If God has already given us all, how much more do we need or should we expect?

God's word is true (John 17:17). He has told us that the word is complete. We can depend on that!

HEART-FELT RELIGION

Mr. Barber, I know there is a lot of discussion about religion and being a Christian, but I believe that the important thing is to be right in your heart and everything else will be all right. What do you think about that?

Let's see what the Bible says.

The heart is certainly important in the eyes of God. The word heart in one of its forms is found 963 times in the Bible. But what heart is the Bible speaking of when it talks of our relationship to God in terms of the heart? Let us read and see.

I am to love God with all my heart. *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment"* (Mark 12:30).

I must believe in Christ with all my heart (Romans 10:9,10). When the man from Ethiopia asked to be baptized, *"Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"* (Acts 8:37).

Obedying God from the heart is essential (Romans 16:17,18). Love for Christ produces this obedience. Jesus said, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15).

To please God, I must live for Him with all my heart. Samuel told the people of God long ago, *"Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart"* (1 Samuel 12:24).

The heart that the Bible speaks of most often is not the blood pump; it is not a feeling. It is the total being of man believing, loving, obeying, serving God.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Barber: Will you please print and explain where you can approve capital punishment by the Scripture. Please give book, chapter, and verse for the public to see and read. Also explain "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord," book, chapter and verse and how to apply both.

Soon after the flood, God said, *"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man"* (Genesis 9:6). We no longer live under the Old Testament laws, but it is interesting to see God's attitude.

Now let us look in the New Testament. Paul recognized

capital punishment and did not object to it. He said, *"For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die"* (Acts 25:11).

The passage you mentioned is in Romans 12:19: *"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* He later tells an individual how to treat an enemy — as an individual. It would be a sin for me to take vengeance for any crime into my own hands. God has provided a way for that to be done.

How does God take vengeance and execute punishment on those who do wrong? Romans 13 tells us. We are to respect and obey rulers because God has ordained them. *"For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil"* (Romans 13:4).

The only way I know of a sword being used for punishment is for the death penalty. God authorized civil government to use it in a just way.

JUST AN INTERPRETATION

Mr. Barber, There are so many ideas on the Bible. There are many, many religious groups and even there we find conflicting teaching. Is it because of so many interpretations? Why did God plan it this way?

You are correct that there are many religious groups. A book by Frank S. Meade, **Handbook of Denominations**, lists over 260 denominations in the United States. A short time ago, a national magazine stated that there were over 1,200 religious groups in our country.

However, God did not plan this!!! It was His purpose for there to be unity (Ephesians 2:13-16). Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20). Jesus prophesied that there would be one fold and one shepherd (John 10:16). This unity was accomplished in the

early church. (Acts 4:32; Ephesians 1:22,23; Ephesians 4:1-6).

To achieve this unity, we are told to be of the same mind — the same understanding (1 Corinthians 1:10). When this happens, it will be from an understanding and acceptance of the truth of God — not individual interpretations. We understand this principle in areas besides religion.

One man agrees to work for another for Rs. 5.00 an hour, but he is only paid Rs. 1.00 per hour. Did both understand? Was it just a matter of interpretation?

Two students are told to learn the multiplication tables, but in working problems in multiplication, they get different answers. Did both understand? Was it just different interpretations?

We are told to understand God's word (Ephesians 5:17). This will bring unity.

CAN'T BE FORGIVEN?

Dear Mr. Barber, Are there some sins that a person can commit that God won't forgive?

God wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3,4; 2 Peter 3:9). God has made provision for all to be saved (Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9). However, God has certain conditions for those who want to accept His grace. For those who refuse to accept God's terms, their sins will not be forgiven.

Notice these sins that will not be forgiven:

SINS A PERSON WILL NOT CONFESS. *"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). John tells these Christians that God will forgive all sins that they confess. However, there is a sin unto death. That will not be forgiven (1 John 5:16). This would be any sin that a child of God would not confess.

SINS A PERSON WILL NOT REPENT OF. *"For if we sin*

wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26). This is speaking of one who continues in a sin and will not turn from it.

THE PERSON WHO PERSISTS IN THE SIN OF UNBELIEF. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life... He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:16,18). Some translations say that the person who does not believe is judged already. One who rejects all evidences of Christ will not allow Christ to save him.

WHAT AM I WORTH?

Dear Mr. Barber, I believe in God and the Bible and I sometimes think I would like to be saved and be a Christian. But I have been pretty mean and I don't know if I am worth saving. Could you help me find out?

What determines the worth of anything? Is it not what someone is willing to pay for it?

Recently I traded automobiles. To determine how much the car I wanted to trade was worth and the value of the pickup I wanted to buy, we consulted a book which told how much people were willing to pay for these models.

There is a book which tells your worth and mine. It is better and more accurate than the one listing the prices of automobiles. Let us see what it says about how much you are worth.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:4,5).

Jesus indicates that one man is worth more than all the

world by a question He asked in Matthew 16:26: *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

But what was Jesus willing to pay for each person? *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"* (Hebrews 2:9).

Yes, you are valuable. God loves you. He wants to save you. Now It's your move!

A GOOD PROVIDER?

Dear Mr. Barber, My wife is a Christian and I am not. She keeps trying to get me to be a Christian so I will go to heaven. I try to be nice to her and the kids. I am a good provider. Don't you think this is enough to go to heaven?

I am thankful I do not have to make that judgment. In fact, God told me not to be the judge! (Matthew 7:1,2).

Let me commend you for being nice to your wife and children and being a good provider. Many families do not have a husband and father who takes these responsibilities seriously. You are certainly doing God's will in this regard (1 Timothy 5:8).

Now let me mention two things for your consideration.

First, while a man who provides the material things for his family is to be appreciated for that, if he is not a Christian, there are some things he does not provide. He fails to provide his wife with a Christian companion, his children with a Christian father, spiritual leadership, spiritual food, a truly Christian home, a good example, and hope and comfort in the event of his death.

Second, one is not saved by just doing good things, but through the grace of God and blood of Jesus. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the*

Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Christ is the only way to salvation (John 14:6). He is the Savior and will save His church (Ephesians 5:23). Let me encourage you to get into Christ and provide your family with spiritual encouragement which they need very much (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3).

GRACE

Mr. Barber, I have heard that we are saved by grace but I don't understand all about that. Does that mean that everybody will be saved whether they want to or not? Please explain grace.

Your question is very important because it has to do with our salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9). Grace has been defined as "unmerited favor; that which we need but do not deserve."

Notice what is taught in these two verses: "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:11,12).

God's grace brings salvation (Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11).

God's grace teaches us how to live. Some things must be denied: ungodliness, worldly lusts. We are to live in a certain way as we respond to God's grace: soberly, righteously, godly.

God's grace has appeared to all men. The life and death of Jesus was for all men (1 John 2:1,2; Hebrews 2:9). Jesus' invitation is for all men (Matthew 11:28-30; Revelation 22:17). But not all are going to be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). This introduces us to the next two characteristics.

God's grace can be received in vain. "*We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Man can fall from God's grace. "*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen*

from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Man needs to respond and be faithful to the word of grace (Acts 20:32).

THE END OF THE WORLD!!!

Dear Mr. Barber, During the last two weeks I have heard a lot about the planets lining up and the world coming to an end. In fact, I heard some people say that the world was coming to an end Wednesday. How did these people know this and what went wrong?

Many have confused the prophecies of Jesus in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. In these chapters, Jesus foretold of both the destruction of Jerusalem and of the end of the world. These were to be two separate events. The destruction of Jerusalem took place over 1900 years ago. The world has not yet come to an end.

The events mentioned by Jesus, often referred to today as the "signs of the times," was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and these signs were to be fulfilled during that generation (Matthew 25:34; Mark 13:30).

Jesus then spoke of the time of the end of the world. "*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father*" (Mark 13:31,32).

Anyone who claims to know when the world will be destroyed disagrees with the words of Jesus and claims to know more than the angels of heaven and Jesus Himself!!! Anyone with this much knowledge would have a hard time being humble.

The world could come to an end at any time. The message of the Bible is to be prepared whenever that day comes (Matthew 25:13).

In fact, you may not even be reading this because the world may have come to an end between the time that I wrote this article Wednesday and the time the paper was to be printed Saturday. I hope we were ready!!!

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT!!

Mr. Barber, I am a young person and would like to do right. But just about everybody is doing wrong. Is it really possible to live right when others do not help and encourage? Please give your advice.

The problem you state is not only faced by young people. Saul, the first king of Israel, followed the people instead of leading them and he sinned (1 Samuel 15:9-24). The apostle Peter melted into the crowd and denied the Lord three times the night of His trial (Matthew 26:69-75).

But this tremendous temptation can be overcome! Here are some suggestions:

Realize that wrong is wrong even if many people are doing it. *"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"* (Exodus 23:2). In fact, most people are going the wrong way (Matthew 7:13,14).

Some people are doing right. Elijah had decided that no one was serving God. But the Lord reminded him that there were 7,000 faithful who had not served Baal (1 Kings 19:18).

Seek the close companionship of the righteous and avoid the influence of the wicked. *"Be not deceived: Evil companionship corrupt good morals"* (1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV).

Make a personal decision and commitment to follow Christ, regardless of what others are doing. *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15).

DOES GOD DWELL IN A BUILDING?

Mr. Barber, how can we know which church building God is in today. Or does he dwell in them all?

It is true that God's glory filled structures is the Old

Testament. *"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"* (Exodus 40:34,35). Later we find that the glory of the Lord filled the temple that Solomon built (1 Kings 8:11).

However, the church of the New Testament is made up of people, not a material structure. *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house"* (1 Peter 1:5). These are the people who have been born again, cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18-25).

After the church was established on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, I cannot read of a building called a church building.

I do read that *"the most high dwelleth not in temples made with hands"* (Acts 7:48). *"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands"* (Acts 17:24).

Today, God dwells in people, Christians. *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16). *"What? Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE CHURCH?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know you preachers talk a lot about the church because you work there and want other people to get in it. But isn't being saved the main thing? Is the church all that important?

First, we realize that the church spoken of in the Bible is not a building or an organization started by man. Christ's church is the one He built (Matthew 16:18). That is the one we will be discussing in this article.

Consider these questions:

The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). Christ is the head of the church. How important is your body to your head?

The church is the house (household, family) of God (1 Timothy 3:15). God is our Father. We are His children (1 John 3:1,2). We are brothers and sisters in Christ. How important is your family to you?

The church is the bride, wife of Christ (Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:22-33). How important is a wife to her husband? The church was bought with the life-blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). How important would something have to be before you would give your life for it?

It is also good to notice that in the Bible being saved and being a member of the church is the same thing. God adds those who are saved to the church (Acts 2:41,47). Christ is the Savior of the body (church) (Ephesians 5:23).

HOW CAN WE HELP THE CHILDREN?

Dear Mr. Barber, I am sad, angry, and outraged! Not long ago in our community of Dalton a baby was beaten until it died. Just a week or two ago in a town near here a new-born baby was found in a trash bag on a garbage truck — dead. What can we do to help the helpless children and prevent these tragedies?

I too am concerned about these and other incidents similar to them.

When we are aware of these situations existing where harm is coming to someone, we should notify the authorities. This is God's way of taking vengeance on the evil and protecting the righteous here on earth (Romans 12:18; 13:7).

We also need to do everything possible to teach everyone possible the real value of human life. We are told that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he

him" (Genesis 1:27). All people are valuable.

Over a million and a half babies are killed by abortion each year in our country — many of these in our own community — in our local hospital. These "legal murders" never receive the attention of the headlines. These deaths are not listed in the obituaries.

It is true that the Supreme Court of the United States decided on January 22, 1973 that this was legal. What if they decide that child abuse and murder of babies through two years is legal? Will we cease to be alarmed? What is the difference between the baby in the trash truck and an abortion? Legally, probably a few hours. Practically, there is no difference. The baby is dead by whichever name you wish to call it!!!

IS DIVORCE THE ANSWER?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have been married several years and have tried to get my husband to change and do better. I am sick and tired of this mess and want to get out. But I also want to do what the Bible says. Please help me.

I am sorry that you are disappointed and depressed over your marriage. You are to be commended in being concerned about God's will in your life.

Consider these things about your situation.

God never planned for divorce (Matthew 19:3-8).

However, Jesus did teach that divorce was authorized when a partner had been unfaithful to the marriage vows. *"And I say unto you, whosoever shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matthew 19:9).

A divorce is not the answer to small problems and many times not even for more serious problems. *"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or*

be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:10,11).

BETTER PRAYING

Dear Mr. Barber, I want to be able to pray to God and have him hear me. But I sometimes feel I am not getting through with my prayers. Can you help me pray better?

You are to be commended for this desire. One of the few things that the disciples asked of Jesus was, "*Lord, teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1).

The Bible teaches us that we must have right relationships with God and with others before our prayers will be effective. Notice these relationships that need to be right:

RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. Nowhere in the Bible is a non-Christian commanded or even encouraged to pray to God. Prayer is a privilege of a child of God to talk to his Father. The relationship comes first. A person who has never obeyed God in becoming a Christian is not promised an audience with God. "*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*" (1 Peter 3:12). "*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*" (1 John 3:22).

RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS. "*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*" (Matthew 5:23,24).

RIGHT RELATIONSHIP IN THE HOME. "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*" (1 Peter 3:7).

MORALITY DOES NOT SAVE

Dear Mr. Barber, I have a friend who can't see the need of being a Christian. He says he pays his bills, treats people right, tells the truth, and tries to help other people — and he does. But doesn't he need to be a Christian? What can I tell him?

Your friend is to be commended for his good actions. We need more people with high morals.

But everyone sins, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Therefore the grace of God is necessary for a sinner to be saved (Ephesians 2:8,9). God's grace is available and is supplied through the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5; 1 John 1:7).

Notice these examples:

The Rich Young Ruler had kept all the commandments, but he needed to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:16-22).

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, but he was told to be born again (John 3:3-5).

Cornelius was a good man (Acts 10:1,2,22). But he needed to hear words whereby he and his family could be saved (Acts 11:13,14). He believed in Jesus and the gospel (Acts 15:7). He repented of his sins (Acts 11:18). He was commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48).

Lydia was a religious woman, who was worshipping God. She also needed to obey the words Paul preached (Acts 16:14,15).

Morality does not save. Jesus saves!!! Jesus, the Savior of all who are saved knows what the unsaved must do to be saved! (Mark 16:15,16).

ACTION OR ATTITUDE?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know it is good to obey God's commands but don't you think that the most important thing is to have the right attitude? Isn't this really the big thing?

Certainly a proper attitude is important — essential. The basic attitude in serving God was stated by Jesus in Mark 12:30: *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”*

But notice this example: Saul of Tarsus was a man who had a clear conscience. *“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”* (Acts 23:1).

He was a sincere man. He was doing what he thought was right. *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (Acts 26:9).

But what was he doing? *“As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and having men and women committed to prison”* (Acts 8:3).

Having a clear conscience and being sincere is certainly part of a good attitude, but wrecking God's church is not pleasing to Him.

In reality, both action and attitude are essential to pleasing God. Acceptable worship consists of both spirit (attitude) and truth (action) (John 4:24). People are delivered from sin when they obey from the heart (attitude) that form of doctrine (action) (Romans 6:17,18).

IT REALLY ISN'T HIS

Mr. Barber, I have a friend who is destroying himself by some of the things he is doing. I begged and begged him to stop, but he says that it is his body and his business what he does. How can I make him stop destroying himself?

I'm sorry but you can't. I appreciate your concern, but you cannot choose for another person. It will help you, and perhaps help him, to realize that you can be responsible to him and with him but not for him. Each person is responsible for himself (Romans 14:11,12).

It is his choice what he does with his body. He can choose the action he takes. Of course, he cannot choose the consequences.

I hope you, or someone, will be able to share Christ's love for him. If he could realize this, he would learn that his body really isn't his. Our body, soul, and spirit all come from God. Knowing this, we are encouraged to take better care of that which belongs to ourselves and to try to help others.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:5). I hope your friend will do this.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

Mr. Barber, I had always thought that God wrote the Bible. But now someone said that it was written by men. And I see where it says it was written by some men. I'm confused. Was it written by God or men?

Certainly men were involved in the writing of the Bible. Paul (Ephesians 1:1), Peter (1 Peter 1:1), James (James 1:1), and others attach their names to the parts of the Bible which they wrote.

However, these men and others were inspired, that is, directed, influenced, by God to write His will. It was not just their idea which they recorded. Peter pointed this out in his second letter. *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came*

not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20,21).

Therefore God used these men in His service to record His will as they were influenced — literally carried along — by the Holy Spirit. We then have God's will for us in the Bible.

All the Bible is God's will and word. Notice this passage: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).*

Not only is the Bible all the word of God, all the word of God for man today is in the Bible. He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). In the scripture we are furnished with all the instruction required to meet all our spiritual needs (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

PAUL'S OPINION?

Mr. Barber, Last week you said that everything in the Bible was God's but I've read somewhere that Paul gave his opinion on something and that this was not the Lord's will. Are there some things in the Bible that are just Paul's opinion?

Perhaps the scripture you have in mind is 1 Corinthians 7:12: *"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away."*

In this passage, Paul speaks to a question that Jesus did not address in His ministry. There are several topics about living the Christian life and the church that Jesus did not discuss while He was on earth. This is the reason He sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles: to guide them into all truth (John 16:13). For instance, I cannot find where Jesus gave the qualifications for elders and deacons. But Paul was inspired to write them (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

But what did Paul think about without ceasing, because, *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, Which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13). *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Therefore when Paul and other inspired men preached and wrote, they were revealing God's will.

DISOBEY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Mr. Barber, I have read where you say that we are not to live under the 10 commandments today. Does this mean that we can steal, lie, and commit adultery? Please explain.

No, we cannot commit these sins and please God. It is true that the old law has been abolished (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14). But we keep many of the same principles today because they are part of the new testament of Christ. Notice where Christ or inspired writers taught the same or greater principles in the new testament:

- I. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* (Matthew 6:24).
- II. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image* (Romans 1:22,23; 1 John 5:21).
- III. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Matthew 12:36,37).
- IV. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.* The day of worship in the Christian age is the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2).
- V. *Honor thy father and thy mother* (Ephesians 6:1-3).
- VI. *Thou shalt not kill* (Matthew 5:21,22).

- VII. *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (Matthew 5:27,28).
- VIII. *Thou shalt not steal* (Ephesians 4:28).
- IX. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor* (Ephesians 4:25).
- X. *Thou shalt not covet* (Ephesians 5:5).

I observe these principles because they are part of the law of Christ (Romans 8:1,2; Galatians 6:2).

DOES REPENTANCE MEAN TO CHANGE?

Dear Mr. Barber, does repentance mean that a person has to change and make things right or just change his mind about what he is doing?

The best definition of repentance that I know is: "a change of mind, brought about by godly sorrow, resulting in a change of life." Repentance, then, is the change of mind. However, genuine repentance brings about a change in action.

Notice these examples.

In Luke 15, the prodigal son changed his mind about himself, his father, and his home. He decided upon a proper action. He then did something about it! "*And he arose, and came to his father*" (Luke 15:20).

Jesus gave an example of repentance by telling a story of a man and his sons. "*But what think ye? a certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went*" (Matthew 21:28,29). The way the father knew his son had repented was by what he did.

When Paul preached in the city of Ephesus, there was evidence of the people repenting. "*And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver*" (Acts 19:18,19). When these

people repented of sorcery and idolatry, the results of this repentance could be seen. Jesus told the Pharisees and Sadducees, *"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance"* (Matthew 2:8).

ASHAMED TO BE ASHAMED?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have a friend who lives a very wicked life. I try to talk to him, but he says that he is not ashamed of what he is doing — so it is not wrong if it doesn't bother him. What can I say?

Your friend is not the first not to be ashamed of sin. Jeremiah the prophet told of those who were greedy, dealing dishonestly, and committing horrible things. He then describes their reaction: *"Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord"* (Jeremiah 6:15).

Paul speaks of those engaged in great sin, *"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness"* (Ephesians 4:19). Of others, he describes their condition as *"having their conscience seared with a hot iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2). These are descriptions of people who are not bothered by sin. Solomon, commenting on this attitude, said, *"For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood"* (Proverbs 1:16).

Why do people have this lack of feeling?

Some do not know right from wrong.

Others will not admit personal responsibility. They always blame their mistakes on others. They do not feel guilty themselves.

Still others have hardness of heart. They just don't care.

We need to remember that God's word is the standard — not how we feel (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

WHY MARRY?

Mr. Barber, everybody's always talking to me about getting married. Do I have to get married to be a Christian? What is the reason why I should?

No, you do not have to get married to be a Christian. You may choose to stay single and serve the Lord. In fact, Paul says that in certain circumstances it is better not to be married (1 Corinthians 7).

Anyone certainly needs to consider the reasons why he or she wants to be married. There are some good reasons and there are some which are inadequate. Others putting pressure on you is not a good reason.

Notice some reasons God gives in the Bible for marriage.

1. To provide companionship. *"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (Genesis 2:18).

2. To propagate the race. *"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it"* (Genesis 1:28).

3. Prevention of immorality. *"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband"* (1 Corinthians 7:2).

4. Give man a model of his relationship to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33).

5. Provide man and woman help in growing spiritually. Peter speaks of a husband and wife *"as being heirs together of the grace of life"* (1 Peter 3:7).

If you marry, be sure your reason is right.

WHAT IS HELL?

Dear Mr. Barber, Don't you think that we should love God instead of fearing Him? Do you really think that hell is as bad as some people say it is?

Since what I think will not be the standard of God's Judgment, let us see what the Bible says.

We should love God (Matthew 22:37,38).

However, there is another motive for our service. Listen to Jesus when He says, "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matthew 10:28).

In answer to the second question, all I know about hell is what I read in the Bible. Consider the description.

Hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Hell is permanent, everlasting — the same length as life eternal. "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life*" (Matthew 25:46).

Hell is designed for punishment. In addition to the verse just noted, it is said to be a place of outer darkness (Matthew 25:30). It is a place of weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30; Matthew 13:49,50). It is a place where the fire cannot be put out (Mark 9:43,48).

Hell is promised to the unprepared. Jesus tells us that many will choose to go this way (Matthew 7:13). These will be people whose names are not in the book of life (Revelation 20:11-15).

I don't know how bad others think it is, but it sounds horrible to me.

LIVING TOGETHER WITHOUT MARRIAGE

Dear Mr. Barber, is it wrong for a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife when they are not even married? If so, would you please give some scriptures on it.

Thank you for your question and your kind remarks.

Since God created man and woman, He realized that they had sexual needs. His plan for the satisfaction of this need, as well as the birth and rearing of children, is found in marriage.

God's original plan and intention is stated in Genesis 2:24: *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* Jesus repeated this in Matthew 19:5 and Paul wrote the same message in Ephesians 5:31.

During a time of distress (1 Corinthians 7:26), Paul advised Christians not to marry, but he did not forbid it if the need was great. *"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband"* (1 Corinthians 7:2). *"But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn"* (1 Corinthians 7:9).

Therefore, we see that sexual relations between husband and wife, those who are married, is right and approved by God when those in that marriage have a right to that relationship. Of course, some commit adultery when they marry because the teaching of Jesus has been disregarded earlier (Matthew 5:31, 32; Matthew 19:9).

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

IS THE RESURRECTION IMPORTANT?

I heard someone discussing recently about whether or not Christ really arose from the dead or if his followers just thought he did. Is it really that important as long as people follow the teaching of Jesus?

Paul discussed this very question in 1 Corinthians 15. There are at least six consequences that follow if Christ did not arise from the dead almost 2,000 years ago.

1. If Christ is not risen, then the preaching of the apostles was useless because this was the substance of their message (Acts 2:24-41; Acts 17:30-34).

2. Christians have a faith that is of no account if the resurrection is not true.

3. If the body of Christ decayed in some tomb, then the apostles and others who preach the resurrection are liars. If they would deceive on this point, how could you trust them on any other matter?

4. There is no forgiveness of sins without the resurrection of Jesus. The forgiveness of our sins is a figure of and is dependent upon the resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3,4; 1 Peter 3:21).

5. All those who have died and were Christians have perished forever. We will never see our loved ones again.

6. This life has no meaning without life after death. Things are not always fair on earth. The wicked sometimes prosper and the righteous suffer.

But Christ arose and we will rise too!!!

PREACHING CHRIST

Mr. Barber, we hear a lot of teaching and preaching on a lot of things such as the church and things to do for God. Would it be a good idea to just talk about Christ and leave these other subjects off?

Certainly Jesus should be the central theme in our preaching and teaching. Paul said, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (1 Corinthians 2:2).

But what does it mean to preach Christ?

We are told in Acts 8:5,12: *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them... But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*

**WHEN PHILIP PREACHED CHRIST, HE PREACHED...
THE KINGDOM**

The kingdom in the Bible many times refers to the church (Matthew 16:18,19; Hebrews 12:22,23,28; Colossians 1:13-18). It came with power in the life time of the apostles (Mark 9:1).

THE NAME

Some say that there is "nothing in a name," but we are told that there is salvation in the name of Jesus. *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

BAPTISM

This was part of preaching Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5,12,13).

This was part of preaching Jesus to the eunuch (Acts 8:35-39).

STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN?

Dear Mr. Barber, when people die, do they go straight to heaven or hell or is there somewhere in between?

The subject of what happens to a person after death has always fascinated man. Let us see what the Bible says about this.

In Luke 16, the veil is parted for us to get a glimpse into the world of life after death. *"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom"* (Luke 16:22,23). These two men, having recently died, are not said to be in heaven and hell, but in some state of pleasure and pain while people are still on earth.

Jesus spoke of such a place when he responded to the request of the thief on the cross. *"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43).

Peter speaks of a place of waiting until the judgment, which was first inhabited by angels that sinned. *"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment... the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished"* (2 Peter 2:4,9).

These things are interesting. However, one thing is sure: our time to prepare for eternity is now! *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest"* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

WHY ALL THOSE NAMES?

Dear Mr. Barber, one of the things I don't enjoy about reading the Bible is all those hard names. Especially the lists. Why were all those names important anyway?

Your frustration in reading the genealogies is shared by many who read the Bible. These lists are certainly not some of the most interesting chapters in the Bible.

But why are they important? What can we learn from them?

After God's people returned from captivity, the genealogies would help in resettling the land according to the will of God (Leviticus 25:23-28; 1 Kings 21:3).

Since the priesthood was hereditary (a priest was to be succeeded by his son), the genealogies were important in establishing the proper person to serve as a priest.

One of the most important purposes of the ancestries is to show the family of Jesus Christ. He came from the seed of David, according to prophecy (Matthew 22:41,42). Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Hebrews 7:12-14).

The book of 1 Chronicles begins with nine chapters of genealogies. They will probably not be read as often as other parts of the Bible. However, they bind the Bible together, give it unity, and remind us that this is history — not legend.

Names remove the idea of the mass and give personality and individuality.

We are reminded that God does not look on mankind as a crowd of humans, but as individuals. He knows each person (Matthew 10:29-31). He knows our relationship to Him (Revelation 20:12).

HOW MANY RESURRECTIONS?

Mr. Barber, how many resurrections and how many judgments will there be? Will the good people be judged first? Will the ones who are alive be judged before those who are dead?

Certainly there are many things we do not know about what will happen when Jesus comes on that appointed day to judge all men (Acts 17:31; Romans 14:11,12). However, in answer to your question, consider these scriptures.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51,52). This verse states that in a moment of time, the dead will be raised — having already been changed into an incorruptible state — and the living will be changed. There will be no difference in the time that the living and the dead meet Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

But these passages seem to be discussing only the righteous dead and living. Will there be a different judgment for the wicked? Consider what Paul and Jesus said:

“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15).

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28,29).

ARE THE MIRACLES REAL?

Mr. Barber, I watch some preachers on TV. They claim to do miracles. Some people say they really do and some say they can't perform miracles. Can they really do miracles like they did in the Bible?

One thing is sure: these people you speak of do not perform miracles like Jesus and the apostles did. The miracles of the Bible were not denied — not even doubted!!! People did not always believe the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, but they did not disregard the miracles.

Notice these examples:

In Matthew 12, we read of Jesus healing a man with a devil. The people did not deny that the devil had been cast out even though they said that He had done it by Beelzebub (Matthew 12:22-32).

The enemies of Jesus opposed Him and finally killed Him, but they recognized the reality of His miracles. *“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our places and nation”* (John 11:47,48).

This same characteristic can be seen in the miracles done by the followers of Jesus. In Acts 3, Peter commanded a lame man to walk. Consider the comment by those who opposed the gospel: *“What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it”* (Acts 4:16).

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know the Bible talks about baptism, but what is the real reason for being baptized?

I am glad that you realize that the reason for doing a thing may be as important as the action itself.

Let the Bible answer your question.

The purpose of baptism is:

TO PUT ONE INTO CHRIST

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

TO ENTER THE KINGDOM

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

TO GIVE ACCESS TO CHRIST'S BLOOD

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). Christ's blood was shed in His death.

FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

TO WASH SINS AWAY

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

TO SAVE

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

IN-LAW PROBLEMS

Dear Mr. Barber, why do people have so much trouble with their in-laws?

The reason for this tension can be seen when we consider the number of new relationships that are being made when a marriage takes place.

For the newlywed, he must build a new relationship with his mate. He is entering into a new relationship with his parents — a partial withdrawing from the accustomed closeness that he previously had in favor of the new closeness with his mate. He is building a new relationship with the in-law family.

Adjustments are also necessary for the parents of the bride and groom. Although they are parents to a person that has been their child for twenty years, that child is no longer an infant or an adolescent, but an adult. The parents will be having some contact with the in-laws of their child. There is the possibility for a radically new relationship between the parents themselves, especially if the child getting married has been the center of the home.

But problems of a permanent nature do not have to be in an in-law relationship. Some of the most beautiful words in the Bible are from a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law: "*And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whether thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me*" (Ruth 1:16,17).

I AM READY TO QUIT

Dear Mr. Barber, a friend who was a very good Christian and who helped me in my spiritual life has recently just denied everything. He has quit church and is living a life of sin. I have just about decided to give it up too. I feel so empty. My friend was a much better Christian than I am. Do you think there is any hope?

I can certainly understand your feelings. Your disappointment is a natural reaction to what has happened in your life. It will take some time for you to recover.

I hope you will allow yourself some serious reflection before you turn your back on Jesus who died for you.

Consider this: Jesus taught us that there would be those who would wither away because of tribulation or persecution and others would become unfruitful when the care of the world and

the deceitfulness of riches choked the word from their hearts (Matthew 13:20-22). If this never happened, then it would have appeared that Jesus did not know what He was talking about.

Some early Christians did become unfaithful. Judas, one of the twelve apostles, betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56). A member of the church in Corinth committed fornication with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1). Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of the faith (1 Timothy 1:19,20). Demas forsook Paul in his hour of need because he loved the world more than the Lord (2 Timothy 4:10).

Remember that our trust is in the Lord and not in men. Jesus said that no man could pluck His sheep out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-29). No power can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:31-39). We are promised that we will not face a temptation greater than our ability to resist (1 Corinthians 10:13). Men may fail us, but Jesus is the same (Hebrews 13:8).

GET ANGRY, BUT DON'T SIN

Mr Barber, I feel so guilty. I sometimes get mad at my family and occasionally at my friends. I know a Christian is not supposed to get angry. But how can I keep from it?

I hope you will not be able to keep from getting angry!!!

We have often been taught that Christians are not to be angry. However, notice what the Bible says: "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath*" (Ephesians 4:26).

But also look at verse 31 where we are told that, among other things, wrath, anger, and malice is to be put away. How can we reconcile these statements? It is true that anger is to be put away. But the only way that anger can be put away is to admit it, express it, and work through it.

What it condemned is not the anger but sin that would come out of anger. It is never right to abuse others either physically or

mentally. I cannot love another and hurt them for *"love worketh not ill to his neighbor"* (Romans 13:8).

But someone might ask, "Didn't Jesus say that it was a sin to get angry with a brother?" Look at what Jesus did say: *"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire"* (Matthew 5:22).

What Jesus said was wrong was being angry with a brother without a cause and sinning in one's anger. This is what Paul wrote from God in Ephesians 4:26 when he said to be angry and not sin.

When a person gets angry at work, says nothing, then is unkind to his family, he has not expressed his anger in the right way. He has let the sun go down on his wrath. Go ahead, get angry. But don't sin!

I'M LONELY

Dear Mr. Barber, recently I've had some upsetting things to happen in my life. I feel so alone. I don't think anybody cares. I don't know if I want to go on. What can I do about feeling so lonely?

First, realize that almost everyone feels lonely at times in life. David, the first king of Israel and a man after God's own heart, once said, *"I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul"* (Psalm 142:4). The feeling of loneliness is normal in many situations.

Second, associate with Christians and find one who will listen and help in your difficulty. You will not feel comfortable with some people. But keep trying. Someone will try to understand. Christians are to do this. *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the*

assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24,25). *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). *"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep"* (Romans 12:15).

Third, work on your relationship with God. He has promised His care and presence to those who want it. *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"* (Hebrews 13:5,6).

FOLLOW CHRIST—HOW?

Dear Mr. Barber, I hear people talking about following Christ. How can we do that since he is not here. I don't understand.

It is true that we are to follow Christ. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Peter 2:21). Since Christ is not here on earth now in bodily form and He was not when Peter wrote that statement, we must follow the example of how Christ lived while He was here as recorded in the Bible (John 20:30,31).

To act like Christ, we are to think as He would think. *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5).

Here are some of the attributes of Christ we should try to have:

LOVE. *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34).

HUMILITY. *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet"* (John 13:14).

SERVICE. *“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:27,28).

FORGIVENESS. While Jesus was dying on the cross, He prayed for those killing Him, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

ANOTHER CHANCE?

Dear Mr. Barber, I would like to live right, but I have done some very horrible things. I don't know if God would forgive me or not. How can I know?

Many people have the same question. What has God said? What has God done in the past?

God once said to His people in the Old Testament through the prophet Isaiah, *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). God says He will forgive even bright red sins!!!

But what has God done?

King David committed adultery with his neighbor's wife. To cover his sin, he had her husband killed. David repented of his sin and confessed it. Nathan told him, *“The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die”* (2 Samuel 12:13).

Peter denied that he even knew the Lord. He even cursed and swore, emphasizing that he did not want to be identified with Jesus. After this, he went out and wept bitterly. He became a great and effective servant of God, preaching to many people, writing two books of the New Testament and serving as an elder of the church.

When the prodigal son came home, notice the attitude of the father, which tells us about God. *“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him”* (Luke 15:20).

God says He will forgive. God has forgiven. God gives another chance.

WE'RE GOING TO WIN

Dear Mr. Barber, what do the symbols in the book of Revelation mean?

Revelation is a difficult book to understand because it is a book of symbols written to people living 1,900 years ago. It would be like someone two thousand years from today trying to understand the political cartoons we read in the paper today.

Notice the introduction: *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John"* (Revelation 1:1). It was to shortly come to pass and it was signified or expressed in signs.

There are a series of visions that John saw and recorded. These visions express a central theme: Jesus and those who serve Him are going to win over those who serve Satan.

In chapter 17, John saw a beast with seven heads and ten horns. The horns represented kings. Verse 14 tells of a conflict between the kings and Jesus: *"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."*

But how do I get to be with Jesus? *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* (Revelation 22:14).

I want to be with Jesus because those who are with Him are going to win!!!

CAN I LIVE WITHOUT SINNING?

Dear Mr. Barber, I want to be a Christian, but I don't know if I can live without ever sinning again. There are so many things that are wrong, even some thoughts. How can a person live without ever committing another sin?

He can't!

A Christian is someone who doesn't make it a practice to sin. He or she will occasionally commit an act of sin. But when this is recognized, correction will be made with God and others who may be involved and forgiveness will be realized. These are interesting statements. But what does the Bible say?

First, people — even Christians — sin. Those who deny that they sin are either mentally incompetent or liars. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 John 1:8,10).

Second, God will forgive His child who wants forgiveness. *"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).

Third, our aim is to avoid sin. *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1). This is another way of saying the Christian is one who lives for God, walks with God, obeys God, knows God (1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:3-6).

FORNICATION—ADULTERY

Dear Mr. Barber, would you please explain in your column what is the difference between fornication and adultery since there are so many that don't seem to know there is a difference. And in God's sight which is the worst?

Both these actions are sinful ways to satisfy the sexual urge that God gave man. Man is to fulfill this need in marriage.

“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

Fornication is a broad term referring to all types of unlawful sexual intercourse. Fornication would include adultery, homosexuality, and sodomy.

Adultery is the act of having intercourse with the spouse of someone else. Adultery involves at least one married person. Fornication could be between those not married.

Sometimes these words are used interchangeably in the Bible.

As to which is worse, the Bible does not say. After naming these and other sins, Paul states, *“of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).*

But the Bible is a book of good news. Anyone who has committed fornication, adultery, murder or any other sin can be forgiven! Ten sins are named in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10. Those guilty of these things could not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul adds, *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).* God will forgive!

DON'T QUIT FUSSING!

Dear Mr. Barber, we have been married for about two years now and we still have fusses. I thought we would be able to work everything out by now and not have all this disagreement. We're both Christians, but we still argue. How long do you think this will last and how can we quit?

It (disagreeing) will last as long as you are married. You can quit disagreeing when you quit talking to each other!

Seriously, I would need to know more details to better understand your situation, but let me make some observations.

First, disagreements between people are normal. No two

people have the same backgrounds, needs, wants, thoughts, and feelings. Conflicts sometimes come from outside sources over which the two people in question have no control.

Great people have had disagreements; Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau, Jesus and His disciples, Paul and Barnabas.

Second, I wonder what happens when you fuss. When you share honest feelings and thoughts, that's good. However, some things would be damaging to a relationship, such as cursing, physical abuse, and pouting which cuts off communication. It is all right to be angry, but it is wrong to hurt someone else either physically or mentally. *"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath"* (Ephesians 4:26).

Third, I wonder if you ever get through with a fuss. Do you bring up what happened last year? Good fussing stays with the present issue. Good fussing doesn't take low blows by bringing in the in-laws into the conversation and how much the other is overweight.

GOD IS NOT GUILTY!

Dear Mr. Barber, why does God want all those people to go to hell? Aren't most people going to be lost? Why did God plan it that way?

Jesus does indicate in Matthew 7:13,14 that few will enter into life and many will go to destruction. However, that was not planned by God. God gave man a choice. You and I can decide which gate we want to enter and which way we want to walk.

God is not to blame for sin. *"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"* (James 1:13,14).

God is not to blame for men being lost. In fact, he wants people saved. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as*

some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Jesus died for every person (Hebrews 2:9).

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4).

God has expressed His desire. Man (you and I) must make our choice.

NOBODY UNDERSTANDS ME

Dear Mr. Barber, I am really messed up and I don't know what to do or where to turn. I need help but I don't think anybody understands me. Who could help?

Problems often get very heavy and it sounds like yours has. Let me suggest that there are solutions to every problem. I encourage you to look for the best solution to your situation.

There is a friend who understands completely — Jesus! *"But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew what was in man"* (John 2:24,25).

Jesus knows how I feel when I am sad, when I have lost someone or some thing that is important to me. When the friend of Jesus died, *"Jesus wept"* (John 11:35).

Jesus knows what it is like to be lonely. *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him"* (John 6:66). When Judas had betrayed the Lord and He was facing death, *"all the disciples forsook him, and fled"* (Matthew 26:56). When I am lonely, I know Jesus understands.

When I am tempted to sin, Jesus knows about that too because He was tempted (Matthew 4:1-10). *"For we have not an*

high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

It's good to know that Jesus knows, Jesus cares, Jesus understands.

SINCERITY ALONE?

Dear Mr. Barber, a friend and I were discussing whether just being sincere is enough to be pleasing to God. What do you think?

Your question is one that is interesting and often asked. Let's see what the Bible says.

Certainly sincerity is important. Sincere means "honest, pure, real, true". This quality is essential for one who wants to be a follower of Christ. "*Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians 6:24).*

Does Jesus want us to be sincere and in error? Notice what He told his disciples: "*Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4).* John wrote, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).*

Saul of Tarsus was sincere when he was persecuting Christians and working against Jesus. "*And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).* Later he said, "*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9).*

Even though he was sincere and his conscience was clear, he was not pleasing the Lord. It was when he learned the truth and obeyed it that he was saved.

Jesus told some people one day, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).*

WHAT IS JESUS DOING?

Dear Mr. Barber, I believe in Jesus, but I often wonder if he is really interested in me. What is he doing now? Does he even know if I am alive? Does he care?

Your question is very real for all of us. What is our relationship with Jesus today?

When Stephen was dying, he saw Jesus and spoke to Him. He knew that Jesus was concerned about him and was listening to him (Acts 7:54-60).

Jesus is still involved in heaven in behalf of His people today. *"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1,2).*

Christ lives in Christians today. Paul said, *"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).*

As people obey Christ today, He is with them. He said, *"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).*

HELP!

Dear Mr. Barber, I'm trying to live a better life. I've become a Christian, but I'm still having problems. It's hard to break old habits. Is there any hope for me to make it?

I appreciate the effort you are making, and I have some good news — there is hope!!! Jesus understands the tug of temptation.

He was tempted. He has given us opportunities for help.

Reading the Bible, meditation on the truth, and confidence in prayer will strengthen you. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:15,16).

Realize that growth and change involves struggle. Paul was a mature disciple of Christ when he wrote, *"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"* (Romans 7:19). Since Paul had that kind of fight in doing the right thing, I should not be surprised when I have some similar conflict.

Having a close relationship with others who are growing as Christians will provide essential support. This is part of what Christians do. *"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another"* (Romans 14:19). *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works"* (Hebrews 10:24).

IS SIN ALL THAT BAD?

Dear Mr. Barber, I know some things like killing people and stealing and all that is wrong, but is everything that everybody says is sin all that bad?

I don't know what you have in mind by "everything that everybody says is sin is bad!"

Let's see how God looks at sin.

God says that sin is like a sore. Speaking to the sinful nation of Judah, Isaiah wrote concerning their sins, *"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wound, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment"* (Isaiah 1:6).

God sees sin as a heavy burden to bear. *"For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me"* (Psalm 38:4).

God describes sin as a hard taskmaster. *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Romans 6:16).

God looks on sin as filth. Peter wrote about those who had gone back into sin: *"The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire"* (2 Peter 2:22).

But there's good news! When a person comes to God, sin is removed. He is merciful and will forgive (Hebrews 8:12).

WHY DO WE HAVE HYPOCRITES?

Dear Mr. Barber, Why are there so many church members who sin and are hypocrites? I get disgusted with it.

It is very disturbing to me to see inconsistencies in others who claim to follow Jesus. It disturbs me even more to see sin in my own life from time to time.

The basic reason that there is sin in the church is that there are people in the church! All of us commit acts of sin. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 John 1:8,10). For the faithful Christian, sin is the exception rather than the rule. His or her life is committed to following Jesus (1 John 1:7). When sin occurs, that person is willing to confess it and turn from it (1 John 1:9).

When we read about the church in the New Testament, we find that there were people in it who sinned. There were several reasons for their sin:

1. Weakness and being overcome by sin (Galatians 6:1).
2. A desire for recognition from men (Acts 5:1-5; 3 John 9).

3. Love of money (Acts 8:18-22; 2 Timothy 4:10).
4. Wanting to satisfy desires in ways other than what God has authorized (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 5:1).
5. Following men in addition to and more than Jesus taught (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:4-6).
6. Some Christians never grow past being a baby in Christ (Hebrews 5:12; 6:3).

WHEN DID JESUS BEGIN?

Dear Mr. Barber, When did Jesus have his beginning? Did God create him when he was born in Bethlehem? I really don't understand this.

Your question is interesting and important.

Although He did not receive the name Jesus until He was born, He existed long before that event. Jesus once told a group of people, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am"* (John 8:58).

Jesus had the form of God before He came to the earth. *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God"* (Philippians 2:5,6).

Jesus participated in the creation as indicated in Genesis 1:27 and expressly stated in Hebrews 1:1,2; John 1:1-3; and Colossians 1:16,17.

Jesus existed with the Father before creation. He was praying to His Father in John 17:5 when He said, *"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."*

In fact, we can see that Jesus as a Person had no beginning. Notice this prophecy of His birth in Micah 5:2: *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephretah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

Dear Mr. Barber, I hear people talking about different ideas on the Bible. They spend a lot of time about which idea is right. Is that really important? Does it really make any difference what a person believes about certain things?

I don't know what things you have in mind. Some things are not important. However, God's truth is very important. Truth sets us free (John 8:32). The truth in the scriptures makes us wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

For instance, the person who does not believe and confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is not of God, is a false prophet, and is the spirit of antichrist (1 John 1:1-3).

One who does not teach the doctrine of Christ is one who does evil deeds. *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds"* (2 John 10,11).

Paul preached the truth, the gospel to disciples in Galatia. He later wrote of the seriousness of preaching something different. *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8,9).

Truth is important and necessary. Error is dangerous. Since cyanide is deadly, it is dangerous to tell people it is good in coconut pie.

IS IT A SIN TO BE ANGRY?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have a temper. What can I do to overcome the sin of anger?

As I understand it, the first step in overcoming any problem is to recognize that we have it. You have done this. That's good.

The next suggestion I would make is to realize that anger is not a sin. Anger is an emotion that God has given us. As with any other emotion, I have the choice of expressing it in either an acceptable or an unacceptable way. I know it is not a sin to be angry because Jesus experienced this emotion and He never sinned (1 Peter 2:21,22). Mark writes of Jesus, *"And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts...."* (Mark 3:5).

However, we must have safeguards on our anger or it will lead us to sin.

First, anger should be recognized, and worked through very quickly. It is harmful to stay angry for days at a time. *"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath"* (Ephesians 4:26). Jesus taught that it was so important to settle a difference between ourselves and someone else that we should leave worship to tend to that matter (Matthew 5:23,24). Then he added, *"Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him"* (Matthew 5:25).

Second, anger should not be expressed in a sinful way by harming others by verbal or physical abuse (Matthew 5:21,22).

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Dear Mr. Barber, I am having terrible temptations in my life and I don't know what to do. I know it is wrong to give in and sin. But it is so hard. What can I do?

The temptation to sin is certainly a reality and can be very painful. It is very dangerous. The direction of our lives can be and are changed by the way we react to temptation.

Counteract temptation — do not tolerate it. *"Neither yield ye your member as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God"* (Romans 6:13). I not only need to refrain from breaking God's

law; I also need to be doing right things to serve God and other people.

Remind yourself that the final pain of sin will soon erase the temporary pleasure. Moses chose *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Hebrews 11:25). The fun of sin is only for a limited time. And when the pleasure goes out of season, the pain is intense and longlasting.

Control your mind and life by knowing and doing God’s word. *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word... Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:9,11). Jesus’ answer to the devil during His temptations was always, *“It is written...”* (Matthew 4:4,7,10).

Often, it is helpful to talk to someone who will encourage you.

ORDAIN A HOMOSEXUAL?

Dear Mr. Barber, The church that I am a member of ordained a homosexual pastor. This has upset me very much. I don’t want to be unloving and unkind but I don’t think this is right. I want to know what you think about this. Should a church ordain a homosexual?

I can understand you being upset. This is a big change from the stand churches have taken in the past.

In answer to your question, let me be very honest about what I think. Whether a church should ordain a homosexual or not depends on the outlook of that church and what that church is trying to accomplish. Some churches are established to give a tax break to the one who started it. Others are started because the ones starting it could not get along with other people.

Another thing that will have a bearing on this question is the creed of the church. Many churches are guided by a creed that

was written by men and revised from time to time. Therefore, they have agreed to go by that creed. If the creed does not forbid this practice, it may be decided to do it.

It is my conviction that every person, and therefore every congregation made up of Christians, should follow the Bible exclusively. In it we find the commands of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). It is complete, containing everything God wants us to do to live for Him (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3). The message is to last forever (1 Peter 1:24,25). The Bible labels homosexuality as a sin (Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9). Therefore, a person who will not repent of this, or any other sin, is not biblically qualified to be a leader of God's people.

I BELIEVE, BUT...

Dear Mr. Barber, I have some faith and want to believe in God, but I have some doubts. When I have these doubts, I feel ashamed because I don't think I should doubt God or what He says. But I still doubt. What can I do?

I appreciate your question. It is my observation that many people are wondering the same thing.

Let us notice Abraham, the father of the faithful. When God told Abraham to leave his home, he left immediately (Genesis 12:1-4). This took much faith (Hebrews 11:8). He continued to follow God and to believe God.

However, about thirty years later, God told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son. Abraham was about a hundred years old and Sarah was about ninety years old when this promise was made. Notice Abraham's reaction: "*Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed*" (Genesis 17:17). Notice Sarah's reaction when she heard the promise: "*Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?*" (Genesis 18:12).

Even though they laughed at what seemed a difficult

promise to keep, Abraham and Sarah obeyed God's commands. God kept His promises. Their faith grew. When God gave the difficult command in Genesis 22 to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, Abraham didn't hesitate. He obeyed God and believed that He would provide (Genesis 22:1-18; Hebrews 11:17-19).

Continue to read God's word. Obey him. Ask questions. Search. Doubt until you find the answers. Your faith will grow!

IS EVERYTHING CHANGING?

Dear Mr. Barber, I am so confused. It seems like everything is changing. Many people have let me down. I don't know where to turn. I can't depend on anything anymore. Is everybody going crazy?

I also feel confused and uncertain sometimes. My car tears up when I had planned on making an important trip. I thought my house was firm and strong. Then one day last spring, I found that thousands of termites had been eating it away. A very good friend in whom I had much confidence, turns away and will not talk to me anymore.

I need something sure. I need someone in whom I can depend. I want to know someone who will always be reliable.

I find that dependability in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. In His character, God does not change. *"For I am the Lord, I change not"* (Malachi 3:6). I can count on Jesus. *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"* (Hebrews 13:8). Because of His basic character, it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"* (Titus 1:2).

Since God is truthful, I can depend on His word. Jesus said *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matthew 24:35). *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth*

forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:24,25).

Sometimes it helps to talk to someone else who also trusts God.

TELL THE PREACHER?

Dear Mr. Barber, A friend of mine who is also a member of my church has said some bad things about me — so I've heard. I wonder whether I should take my preacher with me to talk to this friend or whether I should tell my preacher and let him handle it. What do you think?

First, as I understand it, you do not know whether your friend has said any bad things about you or not. These are things that you have heard. To tell anyone else at this time would be spreading gossip that may be untrue.

Second, if your friend has wronged you, Jesus said not to tell your preacher, yet. *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother"* (Matthew 18:15). Notice, Jesus said to discuss this matter between you and the other person alone.

Third, if this discussion does reveal that you have been wronged and your friend will not make it right, Jesus tells how to proceed. *"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established"* (Matthew 18:16).

Another way to look at this situation is to ask how would you want the matter handled if someone had said that you said something bad about your friend? Had you rather your friend come to you first, or tell the preacher? Jesus said to treat others that way (Matthew 7:12).

DID CHRIST CREATE?

Mr. Barber, I have thought that Jesus had a part in creating the world. But someone else said that God was the only one that had anything to do with creation. What does the Bible say?

First, it is good to notice that Jesus is God, that is, divine. After Jesus showed Thomas the prints of the nails in His hands and the wound in His side, Thomas said, *"My Lord and my God"* (John 20:28). The relationship of the Father and Son is being discussed when we read in Hebrews 1:8, *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom."* Jesus' disciples and the Father Himself recognized that Jesus was divine, that is, God.

There is an indication that more than one person was involved in the creation. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"* (Genesis 1:26).

In other passages it is clearly stated that Jesus was involved in the creation. *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds"* (Hebrews 1:1,2). *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"* (John 1:1-3). *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible"* (Colossians 1:16).

CAN I UNDERSTAND?

Mr. Barber, I have never studied the Bible much and I feel a need to. But I don't know whether I can understand it if I read it. I have heard a lot of people say that they couldn't understand it. Will it do any good to try?

Your concern is very real. Some of the Bible is difficult to understand. Let me give some suggestions that I hope will be helpful.

Realize that it can be understood. *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17). Not only does Paul in this verse say that the will of the Lord can be understood, but I have seen people with very little education understand God's will, become strong Christians, and teach others as well.

Recognize that it takes effort. *"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:4). A book that contains the history of the world, the mind of God, and the destiny of man cannot be mastered in a single evening of reading. A lifetime of study will bless the reader.

Reach out for help. A conversation similar to the one in Acts 8:30,31 could be helpful to many who study God's word. Philip asked the man, *"Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?"* Discussing the Bible with others who love God and His word can bring an understanding that you have never had before.

Remember what is important. Not only knowing but also doing will make a difference in our lives. *"But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22).

OBEY THE LAW

Dear Mr. Barber, I know it is wrong to kill and steal but how about obeying laws such as running a stop sign if nobody is coming or going a little above the speed limit? What is the Christian's duty?

I appreciate your question. It reminds me that my commitment to Christ makes a difference in all my life — not just what I do and where I go on Sunday morning.

Notice the words the Holy Spirit guided Paul to write, *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”* (Romans 13:1,2). He further explains that rulers do not bring punishment to those who do good, but to those who do evil.

However, fear is not the only reason to obey the laws. He continues, *“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not for wrath, but also for conscience sake”* (Romans 13:5).

Peter also wrote: *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that be sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well”* (1 Peter 2:13,14).

From these passages I learn that I am to obey the law. This is to avoid the punishment that comes with breaking the law. But more than this, it is to be an example of my submission to proper authority. And is not this the only way to have people to live together with as little conflict as possible? What if a great number of people started driving on the right side of the road when they thought no one was coming?

HEAVEN

Dear Mr. Barber, I have often said that I want to go to heaven, and I think I do. But I have been thinking about it. What is it like? I don’t know much about it.

I share in your interest. When I am planning a trip, I like to learn about the place that I am going to visit. I am sure that I don’t understand nearly how wonderful heaven will be. Let us

look at some descriptions in the Bible to help us appreciate what is in store for Christians.

Heaven is a place prepared by God and his Son. Listen as Jesus describes the judgment: *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:34). I know God will do a good job with what He makes.

Heaven is a place of rejoicing and praise. There is rejoicing in heaven now when sinners repent. *"Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15:10). There will be praise by men and angels (Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 15:1-4).

Heaven is a place of honor. It is an honor to have our name recorded in the Lamb's book of life (Luke 10:20; Revelation 21:27). Heaven will be a promotion (Matthew 25:21,25).

Heaven is a place of comfort and beauty. Every harmful and unpleasant thing will be absent (Revelation 21:1,4,8,25,27). All that is beautiful and good will be there (Revelation 21:22).

Heaven is a permanent place. It is not correct to say, "All good things must come to an end." Heaven will be endless, eternal, and indestructible (Matthew 25:46; 1 Peter 1:3,4).

IT'S A MYSTERY

Dear Mr. Barber, I would like to know God's will for my life, but doesn't the Bible say that it's a mystery? If it's a mystery, how can I understand it?

The word mystery is used a number of times in the Bible. I have often thought that a mystery is something that cannot be understood. However, in the Bible, the mystery is the plan of God which He had from the beginning of the world. Men had not understood it because God had not revealed it. But when it was revealed by the apostles and prophets, it could be understood (Ephesians 3:2-12).

Paul said that he had been made a minister to fulfill the word of God, *“even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints”* (Colossians 1:26).

He gives some indication how long the mystery had been hidden in Romans 16:25,26: *“Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith”*

I am encouraged to know that I can understand God’s mystery. God revealed the mystery to Paul and other inspired men. Paul and others wrote it in the Bible. You and I can understand it. *“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)”* (Ephesians 3:3,4).

WHAT’S THE HURRY?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have been thinking for a long time about being saved. I know I need to make the right decision. People tell me to hurry and do it, but I don’t like to be pushed. I know I need to be a Christian but what’s the hurry? I need to make up my own mind.

I hope you wait until you make up your own mind. To be effective, your obedience must be from the heart (Romans 6:17, 18). Going through a motion because somebody else wanted you to do it will not put you in a right relationship with God.

I also hope you don’t wait long to make up your mind. God, by His grace, has given us the opportunity to be saved. We must take advantage of this opportunity in a limited amount of time.

After death, it will be too late. *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). On judgment day, we will give account of what we have done or failed to do while we were alive. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Even if we knew we were going to live for a long time, it is dangerous to delay obeying the Lord. Some Christians were warned not to depart from God because they might be hardened in their disobedience (Hebrews 3:12,13). Paul also spoke of some in sin *"who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness"* (Ephesians 4:19). A person staying in sin often loses any desire to come to Jesus.

DOES GOD HURT PEOPLE?

Dear Mr. Barber, Does God make people sick and hurt them when they sin?

Sometimes the sin people commit carries with it punishment. Alcohol and drug abuse often bring about accidents and sickness.

There are instances in the Bible where it is stated or implied that God had a part in the physical punishment of the disobedient, such as Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1,20), Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6,7), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). In these cases, there was a spokesman of God to tell of His involvement in the act.

However, it is clear that all sickness and suffering does not come because of sin. There have always been those who thought so and as a result, many have suffered mentally and spiritually without reason.

In Jesus' ministry, He saw a man who had been blind from

birth. *"And his disciples asked him, saying, master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"* (John 9:2,3).

When Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Melita, he was bitten by a snake. Those who saw it said, *"No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live"* (Acts 28:4). Later, when he did not die and was not even sick, *"they changed their minds, and said that he was a god"* (Acts 28:6). They were mistaken on both counts. Paul was not a murderer and he was not a god.

Sunshine and rain come on both the just and unjust. God does not hurt and kill people for disobedience or we would all be dead.

DOES GOD WANT US SAVED OR LOST?

Dear Mr. Barber, I don't know what to think about God. Sometimes I hear teaching that God wants to condemn us and then sometimes I think he wants to save us. I'm confused.

The best answer I can find to your question is in the parables in Luke 15.

Jesus told about a shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep to go into the wilderness to find one lost sheep. That's concern for the lost! Jesus is talking about Himself. In John 10:11, He said, *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."* Listen to what Jesus said about the reaction in heaven over the return of the lost sheep: *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"* (Luke 15:7).

Next Jesus told about the search of a woman over one lost coin. The search light that God uses is His word which is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my*

feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). After the coin was found, Jesus said, "Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

When Jesus told about the boy who had been selfish, wasted his money, and ended in a hog pen in disgrace, the father who welcomed him home represented God. When the son came home in sorrow, the father told the servants, *"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry"* (Luke 15:22-24).

CAN I MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

Dear Mr. Barber, I want to do what's right and I try to most of the time. But I get so discouraged. My family and many of the people I work with are evil and care nothing for God. I just wonder if I can ever make any difference? I sometimes feel like giving up.

I can understand your feelings of frustration. Let me encourage you to continue to serve God and grow as a Christian. A person who is living for Jesus makes a difference.

A Christian is a letter that others read. Paul wrote to the disciples of Christ at Corinth, *"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men"* (2 Corinthians 3:2). Think of the power of one letter. Think how the world has been changed by the Declaration of Independence. A Christian's life is a letter that carries better news than that document.

A Christian is salt that flavors, preserves, and creates thirst. Jesus taught, *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men"* (Matthew 5:13). Salt is a powerful influence on everything that it touches. It doesn't take much salt to create thirst. Keep

living for the Lord. Someone will get a thirst to drink of the Water of life from your influence.

A Christian is a light that shines in the darkness. Jesus continued to speak about influence: *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14,16). When does a light shine the brightest — in light or in darkness? You have a great opportunity! May God bless you!

DO I LOVE THE LORD?

Dear Mr. Barber, I am a Christian and want to love Jesus. But I sometimes wonder. How can I tell whether I love Him or not?

I appreciate your attitude in wanting to examine yourself. We are taught to do this (2 Corinthians 13:5). Let me share some questions that are helpful to me.

How often do you think about the Lord? We often think about someone whom we love. *"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Colossians 3:2).

How do you feel about your sins? Are you grieved when you sin? David prayed, *"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me"* (Psalm 51:2,3). We try to rid ourselves of those things that are distasteful to those whom we love.

Are you grateful to the Lord? If I love Jesus, I will be eternally thankful to Him. *"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name"* (Psalm 100:4).

Do you love the Lord's word? It is impossible to love God without loving his word. *"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day"* (Psalm 119:97).

Do you love the Lord's people? This is a sign of following

Jesus. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

DIVORCE INVOLVES SIN

Dear Mr. Barber, I know most Christians look down on divorce. But if you are not happy, what's wrong with it? A person shouldn't have to live their life unhappy, should they?

The question you have asked involves all of us either directly or indirectly with family or friends. Let me also state that I know many people have been involved in a divorce through being forced into that position by no choice of their own. These people have my genuine concern.

However, it is my understanding of the Bible that when a divorce occurs, at least one partner is involved in sin — direct rebellion against God's will.

Divorce is a sin because it violates God's original plan. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Divorce perverts this plan.

When a divorce is granted, somebody lied. Those who know God's will marry for life (Romans 7:2). When one or both partners back out, a promise has been broken.

Divorce is a sin against one's partner. I cannot fulfill my God-given responsibilities to my wife and she cannot keep her commitments to me and us get a divorce (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Divorce is a sin against the children involved. Partners get additional responsibilities with children (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4). The person who acts irresponsibly in marriage hurts his children.

I have compassion toward all who are involved in divorce. Correction can be made. I am willing to encourage.

IS IT WRONG?

Dear Mr. Barber, I will be in high school next year. I have a boy friend who wants to feel all over me and have sex with me. I won't let him. Do you think it is wrong?

I appreciate your question. But rather than discuss what I think, let's see what the Bible says.

The desire that you and your boyfriend have for sex is not wrong. However, the actions that you take in regard to this desire are wrong if you do something that is wrong (James 1:13-16). When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin.

Two sins that could arise as a result of this desire are fornication and lasciviousness. Fornication is a sexual act between anyone except a husband and wife. Lasciviousness is the unchaste handling of males and females. Both of these sins are listed as works of the flesh and those which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Those who have already committed these acts can be forgiven when they obey God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Part of God's plan for both the non-Christian and the one who has already been saved is repentance for all sins. This means a change of mind, brought about by godly sorrow, resulting in a change of life.

These things are wrong because God has forbidden them. They can also damage a person's later relationships.

God's way is always best even when we don't fully understand it. I would encourage you to continue to study the Bible and do what God says.

EARTH OR HEAVEN?

Dear Mr. Barber, Recently some people came to my door to talk to me about the Bible. They said they did not plan to go to heaven. They said that God was going to make a paradise on earth and they were going to live here. What they said confused me. Where do you find in the Bible if this is true or not?

It is confusing when people say different things about God's will. However, the Bible is the place where we can find the answer.

First, the earth is not going to be here. Notice what Peter wrote: *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night! in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness"* (2 Peter 3:10,11).

Notice the words "burned up" and "dissolved". What does that suggest is going to happen to the earth? Note also that he specifically states that this is going to happen to *"the earth also and the works that are therein"* — not just evil works in the earth.

Second, we have a number of verses which remind us of God's reward for His people in heaven. Paul said, *"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven ..."* (Colossians 1:3,5). Peter wrote of our reward as *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Peter 1:4).

HOPE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Dear Mr. Barber, I know that after Jesus' resurrection people had hope of living after this life. But what about those good, God-fearing people in the Old Testament? Did any of them have any hope or know anything about eternal life?

You are correct about Jesus' resurrection bringing great hope to people who lived after Him. The attitude of the disciples changed from fear to faith after that great event.

However, God did reveal to some in the Old Testament an idea of what He had in store for His people. Look at these examples:

Job. *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for my self, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me"* (Job 19:25-27). Even though Job was very sick and though he might even die, he had faith that he would see his redeemer, God.

David. In the familiar twenty-third Psalm, he tells of how the Lord, his shepherd, provided and protected him in this life. Then he added, *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"* (Psalm 23:6).

Daniel. This prophet revealed God's plan for both punishment and reward after the resurrection. *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Daniel 12:2,3).

HOW SHOULD I TREAT HIM?

Mr. Barber, Some time ago, a man did some terrible things. It was embarrassing to everyone who knew him. Now he has said he was sorry and has tried to make everything right. How should I treat him now?

The question you ask is one that many find difficult. Let us answer it by asking these questions:

- How does heaven feel about sinners who return? *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"* (Luke 15:7).

- How was the New Testament church instructed to receive a sinner who repented? In the book of First Corinthians, a man

was living with his father's wife. The church was instructed to discipline him. *"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many, So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with much sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him"* (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

• How would you like to be treated if you were the one who had returned after public sin? *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 7:12).

FEAR OR LOVE?

Dear Mr. Barber, Should I fear God or love God? Sometimes I hear that we should fear God because he will send us to hell if we do not serve him. Then others say that we should love God and not fear him. Which should we do?

Both.

We do or refuse to do things for different reasons. The Bible teaches that both these motives should encourage us to serve God.

We should love God. *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment"* (Matthew 22:37,38). *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"* (1 John 5:3).

We should fear God. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13). *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28).

Many people begin serving God from fear. But someone has said that you can't keep a person scared long enough to keep him out of hell. Hopefully, love for God will grow until it becomes the main reason that we serve God. *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:18).

SHOUTING

Dear Mr. Barber, Some of my friends and I have been discussing shouting in worshipping God. They told me that I was not close to God because I didn't shout. What do you think?

I appreciate the question and the opportunity to study this subject. Let us see what the Bible has to say about the worship of God and shouting.

All I know about what God wants in worship is what He has given me in His word, the Bible. I find that the church that Jesus built expressed their praise and worship to God by (1) singing (Hebrews 2:12), (2) praying (1 Corinthians 14:15), (3) teaching God's word (Acts 2:42), (4) eating the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and giving (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

To worship God acceptably, we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Now, what does the New Testament have to say about shouting? This expression is only used twice in the New Testament.

One day when Herod made a speech to the people, we are told their reaction. *"And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man"* (Acts 12:22). Immediately after this, the Lord smote Herod and he died.

The second time the word shout is used is in connection with the second coming of Christ. *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Since this is all that shouting is mentioned in the New Testament, I would hesitate to make that a test of one's closeness to God. In fact, I would want to know where one read about shouting in the worship of the church.

PARKING AND CHRISTIANITY

Mr. Barber, I drive to get from place to place. But after I arrive at my destination, I have to go by wheelchair. Many times the ramps are blocked and the special places have been taken by people who do not need them. Could you write an article about this or does this have anything to do with Christianity?

Yes. I will be glad to write about this. It does have something to do with being a Christian. In fact, my commitment to Christ has something to do with every thought that I think, every word that I say, and every action that I take.

One principle that is involved is that of obeying the law. Unless a law passed by our governing bodies conflicts with a law of God, my responsibility as a follower of Christ is to obey the law. *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to damnation"* (Romans 13:1,2). Our lawmakers have provided these special services that you need. Part of my obedience to God is to submit to these regulations.

But a higher principle is that of Love. Jesus said that the second commandment was, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"* (Matthew 22:39). If I had a special need as you have, I would want others to cooperate. I should then do this for you and others.

Love is a practical thing and not just a feeling. *"Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind"* (1 Corinthians 13:4).

As we were talking recently, I'm sure many just do not think. I hope this article might remind all of us to be more thoughtful and kind.

SHOULD I HAVE MY BABY BAPTIZED?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have a new baby and want to do right. I really don't know but I have been wondering if I should have my baby baptized?

I appreciate your concern for your child. You seem to be taking very seriously this opportunity and responsibility that God has given you.

In regard to your question, notice some things that a person has to do before he is baptized.

Hear the word of God, the gospel. *"And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized"* (Acts 18:8). Hearing God's word comes before faith. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

Faith, belief in Christ. Jesus Himself said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). Without faith, baptism would be worthless.

Repentance, turning from sin. *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38).

Which of these can a baby do? An infant cannot understand the gospel, does not have the ability to believe or disbelieve, and has no sins for which to repent.

In fact, your baby has no need to do any of these things. Your baby is safe in God's sight. Jesus said *"For of such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Mark 10:14). Continue to show this concern and your child will be taught to obey God. May God bless you in this great task!

I NEED HELP

Hello Mr. Barber, Will you tell me how people can go to heaven when they can't understand the word of God and don't know how to pray or read?

Your question is similar to the ones asked in Romans 10: *"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? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? ...So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:14,15, 17).

The answer is that someone must hear, understand, and obey the gospel to be saved. Sometimes that means that another person must help.

Notice the conversation between the man from Ethiopia and Philip in Acts 8: *"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him"* (Acts 8:30,31).

As a result of this man asking for help in understanding the Bible and Philip preaching to him Jesus, the man in the chariot heard the gospel and obeyed the gospel. After being baptized, we read of this man that *"he went on his way rejoicing"* (Acts 8:39).

You have made the right step. You, as the man in Acts 8, have asked someone to help you. I trust that the Christian friends that are calling on you are helping you in your search for truth. Please write again to let me know how you are doing and if I can be of further help.

WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF ON THE CROSS?

Mr. Barber, Why didn't the thief on the cross need to be baptized?

The thief, to whom Jesus promised paradise while both dying, lived and died while the Old Testament, the law of Moses, was still in effect.

The New Testament or will of Christ was not in effect until after Christ died (Hebrews 9:15-17). No one is subject to the

obligations or is profited by the benefits of a will until after the one making the will is dead.

Suppose someone were to write the following letter to the Internal Revenue Service:

Dear Sirs:

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln were loyal Americans and I am a loyal American. They did not pay income taxes and I am not going to pay income taxes.

Sincerely,

Mr. John Taxpayer

How would that letter be answered? It is true that these men did not pay income taxes because our present income tax law was not in effect when they were living. However, that law has been passed and I am responsible to obey it.

The thief on the cross was not subject to the commands of the gospel (which includes baptism) because Jesus had not died and His church had not been established when the thief died.

GOD HASN'T ANSWERED

Dear Mr. Barber, I have been thinking about being a Christian, but I don't know if I want to or not. Lately, I have been praying to God and he hasn't answered my prayers. I don't know if I would want to obey God or not if He won't hear my prayers. What's wrong?

First, all answers to requests do not have to be as I have asked. When my children ask me for something, sometimes "No" is a better answer than "Yes". Many times a "No" answer from God is the best for me.

Second, God has certain conditions for those praying. *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil"* (1 Peter 3:12).

Prayer without obedience is worthless. *"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth"* (John 9:31). *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"* (Proverbs 28:9).

Therefore, to expect God to work in my life while not following Him or His word, is to expect God to do something He has never promised to do.

In fact, one of the ways God answers prayer is by our following His will for our lives as revealed in His word, the Bible. *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight"* (1 John 3:22).

HOW TO ENCOURAGE

Dear Mr. Barber, I have a young person who lives close to me that I want to encourage. They don't have much help at home. Could you give me some suggestions on how to do this?

I appreciate your attitude. I believe that this is a great opportunity for every Christian. You can literally change a person's life by your encouragement!

Here are some suggestions.

Be a good example. Paul said that because of his faithfulness in prison, many others were *"much more bold to speak the word without fear"* (Philippians 1:14).

Compliment others for what they are and what they do well. To compliment someone, tell them what you like, why you like it, then ask a question to let them respond.

Help someone with a need that they have. Some burdens are too big to carry alone (Galatians 6:2).

Trust another and express your confidence in them. Paul wrote to Philemon, *"Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say"* (Philemon 21).

Share your problems and how you are dealing with them when it is appropriate. Many people believe that no one has ever suffered a problem like theirs and made it. It is encouraging for me to learn that someone else has had similar difficulties.

Forgive someone. Think of how the adulteress must have been encouraged when Jesus said, *"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"* (John 8:11).

Pray for that person and let them know of your prayers (2 Timothy 1).

DID GOD KNOW ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Dear Mr. Barber, I have read where you said that God changed the law — that we are not under the Old law any more. Did God know that the law was going to be changed? Are we told about that in the Bible?

Yes. This is all a part of God's plan of redemption.

Six hundred years before Jesus was born, we have this prophecy: *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"* (Jeremiah 31:31).

This prediction was fulfilled when Jesus came and gave us a better covenant which was established upon better promises. *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"* (Hebrews 8:7,8).

Isaiah foretold about a time in the last days when the universal house of the Lord would be established. Over 750 years before Christ was born, he wrote, *"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the*

Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

After Jesus’ death and ascension, the apostles were in Jerusalem. It was here, according to prophecy, that the gospel was preached and obeyed and the church, the house of God, was established (Acts 1:2).

DOES GOD REMOVE NAMES?

Dear Mr. Barber, The question as to whether a person can be lost after being saved continues to puzzle me. When a person is saved, his name is written in God’s book of life — is this not right? Then would God ever take a person’s name out of His book that He had written in?

It is true that God has a book of life that will be opened at the judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). The people who are going to heaven will be the ones whose names are in that book. After describing this beautiful city, John writes, *“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).*

But can a person’s name be removed? That is your question.

David prayed concerning his enemies in Psalm 69:28: *“Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.”*

But was David just asking something in his anger that God really would not do?

Look at a statement from God in Exodus 32:33: *“And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.”* God did say that He would blot out the name of the rebellious sinner. *“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).*

The good news is that Jesus is willing to forgive (Revelation 3:19,20).

WHO'S GOING TO HEAVEN?

Dear Mr. Barber, I think I want to go to heaven. But I get confused. Some say we can't go. Others say that there is nothing I can do about going or not going. What do you say?

Your question is important. Notice what the Bible says about who is going to heaven.

The obedient are going to heaven. *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* (Revelation 22:14).

The bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the church of Christ is going to heaven. *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23).

Those who have their treasures in heaven are going to heaven. Jesus encouraged His disciples to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth because *"where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matthew 6:19-21).

The compassionate are going to heaven. *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:34). These were people who had helped others.

Those who grow and remain faithful after becoming a Christian are going to heaven. After naming the Christian graces, Peter says, *"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the ever lasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:10,11).

DOES GOD CARE ABOUT MY BODY?

Mr. Barber, I sometimes hear people say that it doesn't make any difference what you do to your body as long as you serve God with your spirit. But doesn't God want us to serve Him with our bodies too?

Yes, God is concerned about how we use all the blessings He has given us. And this certainly includes our bodies.

My body is to be given to God. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"* (Romans 12:1).

I am to discipline, control my body. Paul wrote, *"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 9:27).

I am to glorify God in my body. *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). In this passage, Paul was forbidding fornication, because he said that fornication is a sin against one's body. A Christian will not want to do anything that would harm his body.

In fact, the only way that I can serve God to glorify Him to other people is with my body. I need my eyes to read His word. I use my ears to listen to those who weep and those who rejoice. I praise His name and pray for help with my lips. My feet take me to visit and aid those in need. If I served God only with my spirit, others would never know (Matthew 5:16).

WILL EVERYBODY LIVE FOREVER?

Dear Mr. Barber, Will everybody live forever or just those who follow Christ? I thought everybody would.

Jesus said that everyone will have an eternal existence. *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28,29).

When Jesus described the judgment of both the sheep and the goats, the good and the bad, He concluded by saying, *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matthew 25:46).

In these passages, Jesus teaches that all people will have an eternal destiny. Those who follow Christ will have life everlasting. Those who refuse to follow Christ will receive the judgment of eternal condemnation. *“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”* (Revelation 20:15).

Eternal joy comes to those who receive the benefits of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”* (Romans 6:4,5).