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In Daddy's Steps

I watched him playing around my
door,
My neighbor's little boy of four.
I wondered why a child would choose
To wear his dad's old worn-out
shoes.

I saw him try with all his might
To make the laces snug and
tight,
I smiled to see him walk, and
then
He'd only step right out again.

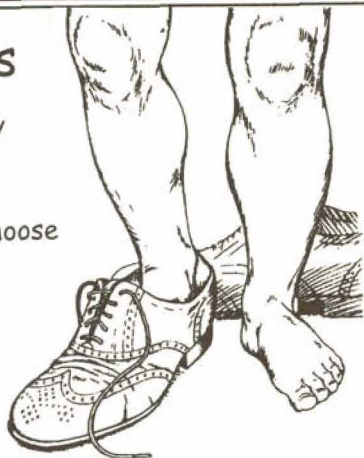
I heard him say, his voice so glad,
"I want to be just like my Dad!"
I hoped his dad his steps would choose
Safe for his son to wear his shoes.

And then a shout, a cry of joy,
A "Hello, Dad!" and a "Hi-yu, boy!"
They walked along in measured stride,
Each face aglow with love and pride.

"What have you done today, my lad?"
"I tried to wear your old shoes, Dad,
They're big, but when I grow to be a man
I'll wear them then, I know I can."

They stopped and stood there, hand in hand,
He saw his son's tracks in the sand;
His words — a prayer — came back to me,
"Lord, let my steps lead him to Thee."

— Anonymous



THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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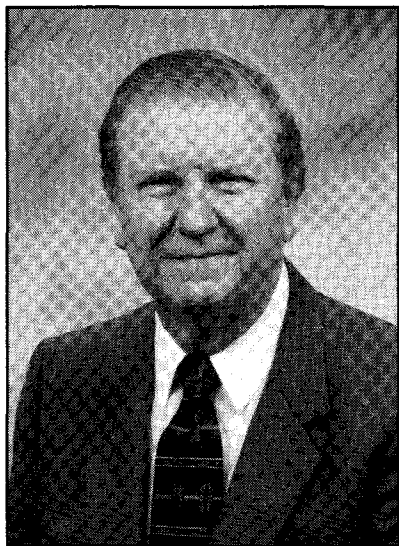
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"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

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



IT'S EASIER TO BE A CHRISTIAN THAN NOT TO BE ONE

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

We often hear *how hard it is to be a Christian*. One must give up and refrain from so many things.

Because of our strict way of life, we lose friends and we are often criticized. Even our children are shunned and laughed at, causing them to have complexes. Some will even say that we are very limited in the religious world since we cannot fellowship those of other churches. And on and on the negatives go. Why? Because we are Christians and we are trying to live the Christian life, which Jesus Himself said is a strait and narrow way (Matthew 7:13,14).

There are those who quickly point to Bible characters, both in the Old Testament (Hebrews 11) and in the New Testament (Read Revelation), to show how much God's people suffered during those times. Even Christ was rejected and crucified, and all of the Apostles, except for John, died for their faith. Then look at the Dark Ages and all who lost their lives because of their faith in Christ. The conclusion would be that if those horrible things could happen in the past, they can happen again in the future — and they do happen even today in a limited way.

Believers in Christ, then, can paint a very negative picture of the cost of Christianity.

Of course the color of the picture all depends on where one places his

emphasis, whether he has genuinely repented of sin and left the ways of the world (Luke 13:3; 1 John 2:15-17), or if he is still trying to hang on to that old way of life.

The majority in the world are deeply involved in sin: adultery, immorality, indecency, drinking, dancing, deceit, abusive behavior, cursing, lying, stealing, gambling, being enemies of God and of mankind, and even enemies of themselves. Now what is so good — so easy — about that way of living? Is that life of sin something which brings lasting joy and pleasure, something that would benefit us, something that we could look forward to, that we could recommend to our friends, and encourage our family members to indulge in? Is the pleasure of drinking oneself sick worth the “hangover” the next day, or cirrhosis of the liver? or is the “fun” of immorality worth dying with syphilis or AIDS? or are the “thrills” of any of the other sins actually worth the consequences — bankruptcy, broken homes, mental illness, loss of trust, loss of family and health and security?

Or maybe, out there in the world, we were actually *good moral people* and did not have such a wicked life to turn away from. Many would fall into this category. But we were still lost and enemies of God. We were still sinners, without hope or help in this world or the world to come. Did that life bring pleasure? Most serious-minded people would realize and admit that sin, in every form and to every degree, is destructive to all that it touches.

Now, while we were in darkness, in sin, lost, and unprepared to meet God, we came across the truth in one way or the other. We learned of Jesus and of the sacrifice He made on our behalf (Romans 5:8). We learned that He could save us from our sin through our obedience to His will, that He could make us sons and daughters in His family, the church, and give us the opportunity to live a good life in this world, with the hope of eternal life in the world to come.

So, we became Christians, freed from all of our sins, and born into the Christian life. Who would want to go back to those old ways, to live in sin, to be lost, and without hope? Who would long for such shameful sins again? Who would feel that he is being denied anything truly worthwhile?

Surely no genuine child of God would think that way. Rather, we rejoice that we no longer have the weight of sin on us, that we have been made free, that now we are with the Lord and that we have all of His blessings.

The younger an accountable being is when he obeys God, the easier it should naturally be to be a Christian. He has not had time to develop many bad habits to have to break, or to get so deep into sin that everything about his way of life has to change. He is therefore in position to more easily turn away from whatever wrong he is doing.

And the longer he continues the Christian walk, the easier it should be to be a Christian. As he regularly worships, surrounding himself with good company, and engaging in wholesome activities, his very way of life will be a shield from many temptations that destroy people out in the world.

Growing in “the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), the Christian will find it much easier to tell the truth than to lie, bad language will be repulsive to him, he will have no longing for strong drink, and immoral practices will have no appeal. The evils and troubles of the world will have lost their strength to ensnare him, because they will have become abhorrent to his very nature.

On the spiritual side, he doesn’t have to debate with himself and with others every Sunday about whether or not he will go to worship, how much he will contribute of his income, how involved he will be in the Lord’s work, etc. All of those decisions were made when he was baptized, so he continues naturally and normally in his Christian life and growth, even as he does with his physical habits of eating regular meals, of getting his sleep each night, of earning his living, of being responsible for his family, and with the many other things in his life that are good and wholesome.

One may have a more difficult time when he obeys the Lord at an older age, due to bad habits already strongly formed, but he should remember that the Lord will be with him, and that He will not allow him to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18). With the Lord all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Oh, yes! *at any age*, living the Christian life can grow to be the easiest way to get along in this old world! The Lord has not asked us to do something we cannot do.

Are you a Christian? If not, you don’t know what you are missing! **It is so much easier to be a Christian than not to be one.** And for sure, there are many more blessings that come to the Christian in this world, and in the world to come, than to those who do not belong to the Lord.

Really, there is no comparison!

†



HOW ARE WE DOING?

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 the apostle Paul urges each Christian to “examine” himself/herself before participating in the Lord’s Supper. He cautions against carelessness and nonchalance. He says that it is very important that we examine ourselves

in an effort to insure that our conduct does not cause us to eat the bread and drink the cup in an unworthy manner.

Paul writes to the church at Corinth again, “*Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves*” (2 Corinthians 13:5). In this instance Paul is affirming the great need of everyone to take inventory, take a close look at his/her life in relation to Christ’s law and His life, to see how well we measure up. He points out that it is possible that we are not even “*in the faith.*”

Context is always very important, this is true. However, even when the context is different, there may well be one or more principles that have broad application even outside the actual context. In both of the above references, the Bible provides us with such a principle. We are clearly being told that it is always important for us to examine our lives, our ideas, our motives, our spiritual growth, our commitment, our attitudes, etc., in the light of God’s Word.

Just as individual Christians must examine themselves, surely congregations need to do the same. It is imperative that we consistently examine what we are teaching and preaching against the standard of the Bible. We also need to examine our programs of work from time to time to see if they are really accomplishing what the Lord would have them to.

With all of this in mind, I believe that it is needful for us also to periodi-

cally examine the work and progress of *The Voice of Truth International*. We must make sure that this gospel teaching endeavor stays on course, that it continually points mankind to the Bible as our only source for authority in matters of religion. We further need to examine this work to see what it is accomplishing and to determine whether it is worthy of the support and confidence of the Lord's people.

How are we doing relative to the matter of keeping the magazine focusing the attention of the readers to what the Bible says? If the feedback from our readers is a fair assessment of the matter, we are doing quite well. Our readers from far and near repeatedly tell us that they are so grateful that *The Voice of Truth International* teaches what the Bible says on the various subjects with which our articles deal. They express their appreciation for the writers and their constant emphasis upon the Word of God as the final authority. They tell us that it is so refreshing to read articles that boldly stand for and proclaim the truth, but which do so in such a way as to show consideration for others and their feelings. They lead us to believe that we are doing what we set out to do — to “*speak the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15).

How are we doing in terms of growth and accomplishment? When we printed the first issue, Volume 1, we printed 5,000 copies. Those copies went into a handful of states here in America, and a few copies went into just a small number of other countries. That was 5 ½ years ago. You are now reading Volume 21. Your copy is one of about 30,000 that were printed. This issue is going to congregations and individual homes in all 50 states in the U.S., and thousands of copies are going into nearly 100 different countries around the globe. This truly is *The Voice of Truth International!* A growing number of congregations in the U. S. provide copies of each quarterly issue for their members in an effort to give them good spiritual food on which to grow. Many copies are used in evangelistic outreach efforts by congregations and individuals. Numerous copies are being used in hospital and shut-in visitation programs. Copies are being given to folks who visit the services of the local congregation. An increasing number of copies are being used very effectively in prison ministries around the country. Some congregations are providing a supply of each issue for use in foreign mission efforts which they support. Many copies are being placed in waiting areas of doctors' and dentists' offices, hospitals, beauty and barbershops, automotive repair shops, etc. In summary, it appears that the magazine is progressing well in terms of growth and accomplishment.

How are we doing as far as subscriptions are concerned? Our sub-

scription total is not at all what it needs to be. Many receive the magazine through their congregation rather than through a personal subscription, but the number of subscribers is much too low. Far too few are taking advantage of such an inexpensive way to have outstanding material at their fingertips that will help them to grow and develop into the spiritually mature disciples that the Lord wants and needs in His church.

How are we doing relative to financial support from congregations and individual Christians?

The support has increased significantly since the magazine came into being, but unfortunately, the support has not kept up with the increase in the scope and extent of the work. The needs and opportunities are so evident that they dare not be ignored. So many people need this publication and would dearly love to have access to it. A sizeable number of them would thus be assisted greatly as they search for the truth in finding out what they need to do to be saved eternally. There is just no end to the number of copies of each issue that could be used very effectively and efficiently in teaching and reaching the lost, as well as in strengthening the saved, if only we could print and distribute them. We are in need of many more congregations, as well as individual Christian families, who will join with our existing supporters in

putting this gospel magazine into the hands and hearts of just as many souls as possible while the opportunity exists. We need all of our current supporters who can to increase their financial assistance to this work.

Upon conscientious examination, I honestly believe that this work is deserving of the support of the Lord's church. As we have tried to stress before — *The Voice of Truth International* is not a business venture — it is a work of the church. I believe that it is fair to say that it is an outstanding tool for both edification and evangelization. Elders would be hard-pressed indeed to find a more cost-efficient, more effective way of feeding the flock and teaching the lost.

Let me close with this request for our Christian readers — Please carefully and prayerfully consider including *The Voice of Truth International* in your will. By allotting part of your estate for use in continuing this work, you will be able to see that your influence will live on and on and on. Because of your planned generosity and stewardship, countless souls will be saved eternally. What a grand and glorious day that will be when we see for the first time brothers and sisters in Christ who are in Heaven because we cared enough to do what we could to see that they were taught how to take advantage of the cleansing blood of the Lamb! †

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**THE VOICE OF TRUTH
INTERNATIONAL**

The wonderful story of the work in Nigeria is our focus in this issue of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. And with this issue we are adding a Nigerian Edition to our growing list of editions. How exciting it is to know that we — with the help of subscribers and supporters of the magazine — are helping to provide, in bulk, a valuable teaching tool for the Lord's work in another country!

Always, of course, it is "nip and tuck" to pay the printer after the delivery of each issue, because we continue to add to the number of editions. **You can help with this. Let me explain how:** *Churches and individuals that are already involved with the Nigerian work could include THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL in your budget.* For only \$700 a quarter you can pay for 1000 copies of one issue, shipped to your specified address in Nigeria. How else could you do so much for so little, in a country where literature is so effective?

Call us at 601-283-1192. JCC

My Place of Peace

There is a rock
In a little clearing in the woods:
A healing place for me.

Looking back to childish years,
To feelings and emotions
Untried and strange,
This place, most often,
Was my refuge from the world.

I think
I might not
Perhaps
Have safely lived those years
Without this shrine.

Later,
Married
And living far away,
Still, the solitude was in my
heart,
Strength to draw from
When the need was strong.

And now, again,
My little spot has been restored,
My place of peace.

I wonder, if
In God's vision of the road
ahead
He sees
Perhaps
How great my need will be
And,
Out of mercy,
Has restored this place to me?

— Betty Burton Choate

GOD



God Cares for Christians

Gary C. Hampton

Years ago, a foreman in a soap factory accidentally left a batch in through the noon hour. When his lunch was delayed, the soap in the

GOD

vat was cooked well past the normal time limit. Fearing he would be fired, the foreman shipped the soap instead of reporting the problem.

The company was deluged with orders for this new soap. It seems it cleaned just as well and was so light it floated. The foreman was promoted. He cooperated with company chemists to revise the old recipe and begin producing the lighter soap.

Christians Will Ultimately Receive Good

Christians may sometimes feel they have been left cooking in the vat too long. However, God will ultimately work all things out for His children's good. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

John says the one who loves God will live in accord with His commandments (2 John 6). Thankfully, God never asks His people to do anything that would be too great a weight upon them (1 John 5:3). God's call goes out to all the lost in the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). Those who answer His call in obedient faith have the assurance all things will work together for their ultimate good (Matthew 7:21). In other words, they will be in heaven.

God foreknew the type of man who would love Him and receive His call. God knows the future in much the same way we know the past. Our knowledge of history did not make it happen. God's knowledge of what will be does not make it happen either. God pre-ordained that the obedient would be pronounced free from guilt, or justified, and be received into heaven, or glorified (Romans 8:29,30).

God Cares For Christians

Paul well asks, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31). The extent of God's care for His children is seen in the sacrifice He made for them. *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32). One who would sacrifice His own Son for the sake of others would surely not withhold any lesser good.

No one is capable of bringing a charge against God's elect other than God Himself. After all, God has pronounced us free from guilt. Christ waits to intercede for us like a lawyer ready to talk to the judge in behalf of a client who does not know how to defend himself (Romans 8:33,34).

Christians Will Be More Than Conquerors

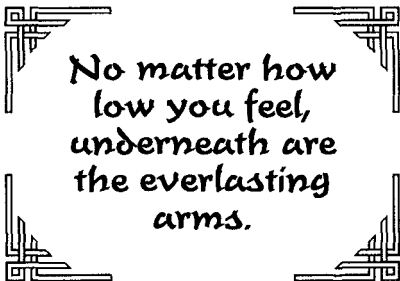
Our enemies may count us like

so many dead sheep, conquered. Yet, we have overcome sin and death (Romans 8:35-39). We have a greater victory than any earthly conqueror has ever known through our loving Savior Jesus Christ. *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Conclusion

The faithful child of God has the assurance that he will ultimately receive a good reward in heaven. God has freed him from guilt and will deliver him to glory. The Creator is ever ready to give him whatever good thing he needs. There is nothing powerful enough to separate him from the love of God. So, he can approach life with confidence, knowing God cares for him.†

Gary C. Hampton is a writer and preacher in Valdosta, Georgia, U. S. A.



**No matter how
low you feel,
underneath are
the everlasting
arms.**

**Tonight,
my soul, be still
and sleep;
The storms are
raging on
God's deep —**

**God's deep,
not *thine*;
be still and
sleep;**

**Tonight,
my soul, be still
and sleep;
God's hand shall
still the tempest's
sweep —**

**God's hand,
not *thine*,
be still and
sleep.**

— Selected

GOD

Our God Forever

Bill Dillon

Do you want to hear one of the secrets to great living? Listen to Psalm 48:14: "*For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.*"

The above truth gives strength to the weak; comfort to the wearied; soul-healing to the sin-broken; peace to the troubled, and hope to the dying.

Who is this God? He made heaven and earth, and controls the march of events. He fashioned the stars, the moon, and the sun. Without His knowledge, not one sparrow falls to the ground, and by Him the very hairs of our head are numbered (not a difficult task in my case!). He feeds the birds and supplies men with their daily bread. He is capable of taking better care of us than we can of ourselves. Yes, ". . . it is He that made us . . . and we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (Psalm 100:3). He is a holy, just, gracious, and loving God — our God!

On nothing can we trust, save in this great God. One day this earth and all that is within it shall pass away, but God will remain, imperishable through the ages.

The life God has given is not fixed or stationary. We are tending somewhere at all times. In life, move we must. But in what direction do we move? Are we going upward or downward? God is our guide. He is the Light that knows no darkness. His ways are sure and certain. His counsels are sound. He is the God of knowledge. He knows us and our trials. He cares for each of us as if there were in the world no other than you yourself.

Let this God be your guide throughout life, and even unto your dying hours. He will graciously lead you in the path of righteousness by His own loving hand. Guided by Him you shall never perish.

"Our changeful lives are ebbing to an end,
Onward to darkness and to death we tend;
O conqueror of the grave, be Thou our Guide,
Be Thou our Light in death's dark tide;
Then in our mortal hour will be no gloom,
No sting in death, no terror in the tomb." †

Bill Dillon is editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the Lord's church in Mountain Home, Arkansas, U.S.A.

No Room in the Inn

Jack Harriman

The Son of God was born in a stable "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2). Why did the innkeeper not make room? Surely a room could have been made available for *the Son of God!*

◆ Perhaps he did not make room for Jesus because he was not **EXPECTING** Him.

Many in this day have not made room for Jesus in their lives because they do not expect Him to come (at least not soon). If we knew the Lord would be returning tomorrow, repentance would take place, the like of which has not been seen since the days of Jonah and Nineveh! The Lord is coming again (Acts 1:11), and perhaps before tomorrow morning (Matthew 25:13). The only reasonable course of action is to be prepared for that coming.

◆ Perhaps the innkeeper did not make room for Jesus because he did not **RECOGNIZE** Him.

It was prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) in the days of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2). It seems that the innkeeper should have been asking every young, expectant woman if she were a descendant of David. Men today do not make room for Jesus in their lives because they do not recognize Him. Blind indeed is the man who cannot recognize the heavens and earth as the work of God's hands, or who can read the Bible without seeing its Divine characteristics.

◆ Perhaps the innkeeper did not make room for Jesus because he did not **WANT** Him.

"We do not want this man to reign over us," they said (Luke 19:14). Many today simply do not want this man to rule over them. Still others would receive Him, but only on their own terms. Men want Jesus without obeying the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8), without the church (Ephesians 5:22-27), or without giving up sin (Romans 6:1,2). But these are not **His terms**.

Will you make room for Jesus in your life?



Jack Harriman preaches for the Center Street Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U.S.A.



The Heavens

Declare!

Betty Burton Choate

Because of the discoveries of science, we understand many things about the Universe, the Earth, and even our own bodies that we could not have known without the tireless studies of these intelligent people. The observation is made:

"If we are to get a day and a night out of twenty-four hours of rotation, the Earth must make a complete rotation once in each twenty-four hour period. Earth is some 24,000 miles in circumference at the equator. To get those 24,000 miles all the way around in twenty-four hours, every point and every person on the equator must be moving at 1,000 miles per hour!

"...And our day-night rotation is the small part of our cosmic travels. To get through a year in 365 days, the Earth moves around the Sun at 20 miles per second. And the entire solar system, us included,

is hurtling around the center of our galaxy, the Milky Way, at ten times that speed.... Can you *feel* any of this?" (**The Science of God** by Gerald L. Schroeder)

Consider this: *True science is actually an intense and ever-expanding study of the mind and works of God!*

Of course the "Darwinian Theory of Evolution" is a hoax, and so are countless other things that "science" has pronounced. Paul warned Timothy, "...avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science [knowledge which is] *falsely so called*" (1 Timothy 6:20). So we must not accept as true every statement made in the name of science; we must be on guard and believe nothing that is a contradiction of plain teachings in God's word.

Ever will it be, to those of us

GOD

who have lived as God's children — to those of us who believe — that we will see God as the cause and beginning of all things. Whatever wonders Science may explain, to us *God is the bottom line*. These marvels exist because

entists are struggling to unravel the mysteries of matter, space and time; while they glory in each small step of progress in identifying the *existence* of a thing, and perhaps *guessing* at what it does, wondering just *how it does what it does*, and miss-

True science is actually an intense and ever-expanding study of the mind and works of God!

they were first conceived in His mind, and then they were brought into physical existence through the power of His Word.

And through those scientific discoveries that are true, what marvels we learn about our God!

It blows my mind even to think that this earth which seems absolutely still — not a twig blowing on a tree — is actually spinning a thousand miles an hour! And that it is thrusting itself forward in an orbit around the sun at the rate of 72,000 miles per hour! And that the Solar system as a unit is hurling around within the Milky Way 720,000 miles and hour! And scientists are sure that even the whole Milky Way is also moving through space! Yet we feel none of this!

If it's true — and it *seems* to be true — What a **BEING!** What a **POWER!** What an **INTELLIGENCE!** What an **ETERNAL ONE!**

While extremely intelligent sci-

ing so many points that must wait until perhaps *years* or *ages* later to be laboriously learned — while scientists do all of these things — God serenely watches their efforts and discoveries from His glorious throne. **He** conceived the marvel they are studying, with all its intricacies, with its depth of mysteries; **He** put it in place; **He** has sustained its existence and its continued working through the ages of time.

He watches and waits, and surely He smiles because humans are **learning something of His mind and power** in their desire to know the world around them!

Truly, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge*" (Psalm 19:1,2). †

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate, missionary to India, living in Winona, MS, U.S.A.



How Did It All Start?

Bruce Buckley

A scientist recently bragged that scientists are closing in on how the world came into being. But they are still spending billions of dollars exploring space for answers that have been available since creation.

Materialists and evolutionists believe that nothing gave rise to something. It did not in the sense they think. They believe that matter has always existed or that there was a time when no matter existed. They have to think that matter created matter when none existed, or that matter existed and then created the world and all in the world. If they would believe the Psalmist they would have their answer. *"For he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:9).

The writer of Hebrews tells us, *"By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear"* (Hebrews 11:3).

Without any materialistic substance in existence, God spoke into existence that which before had no existence. We are told that this happened *"in the beginning."* The "beginning" was of creation, and not the beginning of God. It is much easier to believe David than all of today's scientists.

Nor could there be a more comprehensive statement than that of Genesis 1:1. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* This statement refutes atheism, which denies the existence of God. It also denies polytheism,

EVIDENCES

because it tells us **there is but one God**. This introductory statement to God's account of creation also names the five existing elements: "*In the beginning*" — **time**; "**God**" — **cause**; "*created*" — **energy**; "*the heaven*" — **space**; "*and the earth*" — **matter**.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea together as an heap: He layeth up the depth in storehouses.

"Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded

and it stood fast...

"The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth..." (Psalm 33:6-13).

None of this was an accident, but was "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1).

Why will all not believe it? †

Bruce Buckley is an elder in the Chapel Avenue congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.



If the Bible record is true — and we believe it is — then,

✓ if scientists could go back to one minute after the creation of light, they would be saying it had already been in existence eons of "light years" because it would have already "reached" earth. God obviously created light "full grown", already covering the distance to the point which He intended it to provide illumination. Seeing "light" one minute after its creation would not have shown an embryonic stage of the development of light.

✓ if scientists could go back to one minute after the creation of man, they would be saying that he was 20 years, or 30 years old — or whatever his age might have appeared to be — because Adam was created full grown, able to assume the responsibilities, work, and procreative functions of an adult. Seeing man one minute after his creation would not have shown an embryonic stage of the development of humanity, to explain any of those "mysteries".

✓ if scientists could go back to one minute after the creation of the universe, they would not see its "embryonic" beginnings either, because it was created "full grown", able to function as required in this completely interwoven and interdependent universe of which we are a very small part. — BBC

Evolution or Creation?

Dr. Bert Thompson

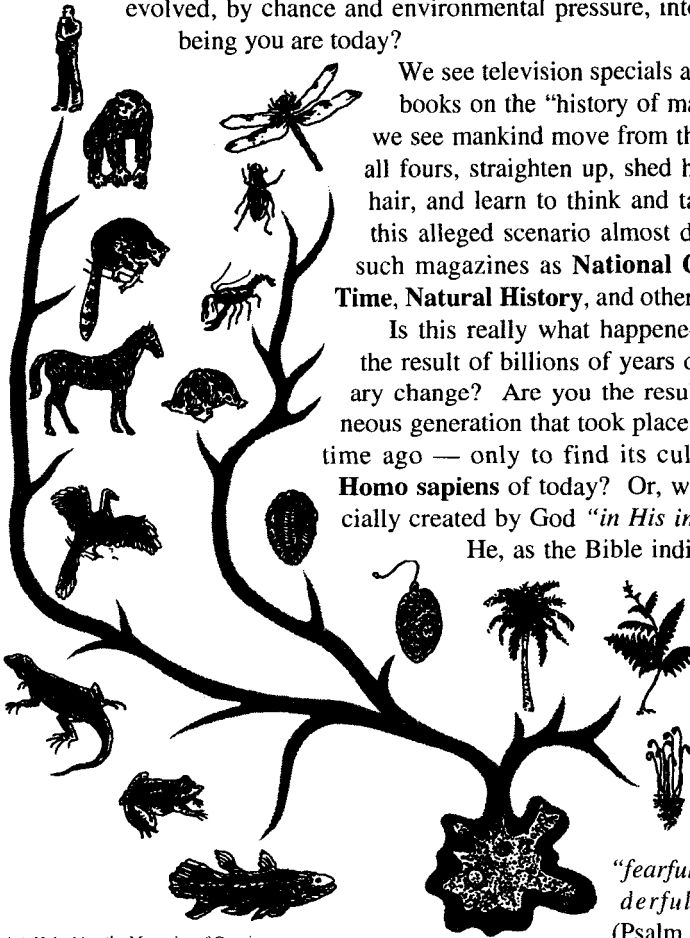
Are you a descendant of an ape-like creature that lived millions of years ago? Did your forbears at one time swing through the trees on some remote island? Can you trace your "roots" back to some primordial slime that evolved, by chance and environmental pressure, into the human being you are today?

We see television specials and read textbooks on the "history of man" in which we see mankind move from the swamp on all fours, straighten up, shed his tail, grow hair, and learn to think and talk. We see this alleged scenario almost daily through such magazines as **National Geographic**, **Time**, **Natural History**, and others.

Is this really what happened? Are you the result of billions of years of evolutionary change? Are you the result of spontaneous generation that took place a long, long time ago — only to find its culmination in **Homo sapiens** of today? Or, were you specially created by God "in His image"? Did He, as the Bible indicates, create

mankind
"male
and female"
(Matt. 19: 4)? Are we, as the Psalmist wrote,

"fearfully and wonderfully made"?
(Psalm 139:14).



Art: Unlocking the Mysteries of Creation

EVIDENCES

What does the evidence say? It's not enough for someone to venture a mere opinion. What we need here is evidence adequate to the situation. Is there any? Indeed there is.

The fundamental law of biology is the **Law of Biogenesis**. *This law (and there are no known exceptions to it in nature) states that all life comes from preceding life of its kind.* As Dr. McNair Williams said in an Oxford University Medical publication: "*Modern medicine and surgery are founded on the truth enunciated by Pasteur, that life precedes only from life, and only from life of the same kind and type.*"

Evolution postulates *spontaneous generation* — life arising from non-life. Yet all available scientific evidence establishes beyond the shadow of a doubt that spontaneous generation simply does not occur. Experiment after experiment has shown that only life can give rise to life. All the while we are asked to believe that *somehow, sometime, somewhere* spontaneous

generation did occur, and here we are as a result of it.

Evolution postulates *an ever-increasing upward trend in complexity*. We are told that nature moves upward, from disorder to order, from the simple to the complex, and that this is how evolution has actually occurred. Yet this is in direct contradiction to one of the most basic, most fundamental laws of science — the **Law of Entropy**. This law (also known as the **Second Law of Thermodynamics**) *states categorically that all systems move toward higher entropy.* That is to say, *all systems go from order to disorder, from complex to simple. All things are becoming more and more random, not structured.* And eventually, if the Universe lasts long enough, the Earth would die a "heat death" because energy is becoming less available for use as time goes by. †

Dr. Bert Thompson is Executive Director of Apologetics Press in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.



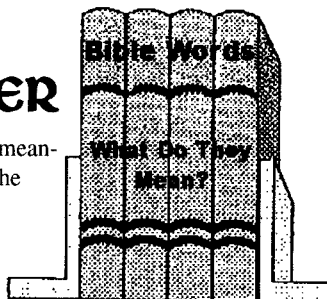
The **First Law of Thermodynamics** (something must come from something) teaches us that the Universe could not have come from nothing. To have something like the Universe, we have to have something even greater to make it. That something, or Someone, is God.

The **Second Law of Thermodynamics** teaches us that the Universe must have had a beginning. The very first verse of the Bible says, "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*"

— **Trevor Major, Discovery Magazine**

It Helps to Enrich Your BIBLE WORD POWER

Are you sure you are understanding the richest meaning of the Bible? Test your comprehension of the following words used in the context found in Romans 4 (KJV). After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.



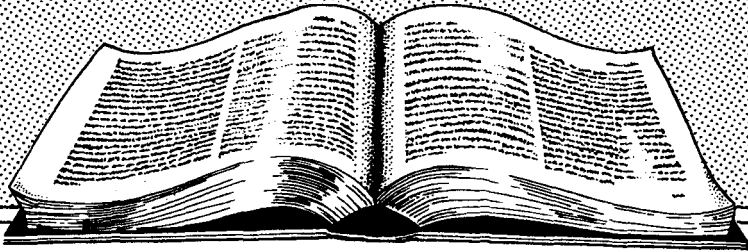
1. **flesh** *n.* – (Gk. *sarx*) A: skin B: humanity C: by the fleshly or human mind D: weakness that is caused by sin.
2. **justified** *v.* – (Gk. *dik ah yo' o*) A: to render just or innocent, righteous B: holy C: having one's case dismissed D: innocent within one's own self.
3. **Scripture** *n.* – (Gk. *grafay*) A: a book of guidance B: scrolls C: myths and rules written by men D: Holy Writ, the inspired message from God.
4. **righteousness** *n.* – (Gk. *dik ah yos oo' nay*) A: the state of being forgiven B: perfection C: penitence D: the characteristic of being right and just.
5. **reward** *n.* – (Gk. *mis thos*) A: a bounty B: the payment made for services rendered C: money paid in bribery D: in lieu of payment.
6. **grace** *n.* – (Gk. *khar' ece*) A: to be agile B: God's spiritual blessings and favor, unearned by the recipient C: beautiful D: kindness.
7. **debt** *n.* – (Gk. *of i' lay mah*) A: money B: that which is owed C: sin against God D: realization of one's failures.
8. **imputeth** *v.* – (Gk. *log id' zom ahee*) A: to reckon or to take into account B: impenetrable C: something that is forgiven D: God's laws being broken.
9. **works** *n.* – (Gk. *er' gon*) A: assignments B: volumes of books C: opposite of playing D: labor done in order to earn payment.
10. **sign** *n.* – (Gk. *say mi' on*) A: a signature B: a mark or token which distinguishes one person or thing from another C: to agree to a thing D: to show.
11. **promise** *n.* – (Gk. *ep ang el ee' ah*) A: announcement of a pledge, especially a divine assurance B: a blessing C: money given as a pledge D: law.
12. **seed** *n.* – (Gk. *sper' mah*) A: an edible grain B: offspring, descendants, posterity, those who by right of lieage are heirs C: small particles D: life.
13. **law** *n.* – (Gk. *nom' os*) A: ideas B: parental rule C: "the" law, having reference to the ordinances given by God through Moses D: a policeman.
14. **weak** *pred. adj.* – (Gk. *as then eh' o*) A: to be feeble, impotent B: with little moral character C: lacking in knowledge D: trembling with fear.
15. **deadness** *n.* – (Gk. *nek' ro sis*) A: numb B: figuratively, the state of being dead, without power C: not quick to understand D: not alive.
16. **staggered** *v.* – (Gk. *dee ak ree' no*) A: broken B: drunken C: to withdraw from, to waver D: not sure of oneself.
17. **offenses** *n.* – (Gk. *par ap' to mah*) A: unintentional error or wilful transgression B: an offering C: to be sorrowful D: a crime against society.

1. **flesh** *n.* – (Gk. *sarx'*) C: by the fleshly or human mind; the physical and earthy, in contrast to the spiritual realm
2. **justified** *v.* – (Gk. *dik ah yo' o*) A: to render just or innocent, righteous; we are justified by the blood of Christ, not by our own goodness.
3. **Scripture** *n.* – (Gk. *graf ay'*) D: Holy Writ, the inspired message from God; the combined Old and New Testaments.
4. **righteousness** *n.* – (Gk. *dik ah yos oo' nay*) D: the characteristic of being right and just; true faith or belief in God moves one to behave righteously in response to what God asks.
5. **reward** *n.* – (Gk. *mis thos'*) B: the payment made for services rendered; the eternal home promised to the faithful of God's children.
6. **grace** *n.* – (Gk. *khar' ece*) B: God's spiritual blessings and favor, unearned by the recipient; the beauty and sweetness of God's love poured out on those who have been born into His family.
7. **debt** *n.* – (Gk. *of i' lay mah*) B: that which is owed; the salvation promised us is not something we have earned by our own works.
8. **imputeth** *v.* – (Gk. *log id' zom ahee*) A: to reckon or to take into account; to have sins marked against one's heavenly record.
9. **works** *n.* – (Gk. *er' gon*) D: labor done in order to earn payment; there are works of righteousness (faith, obedience, even baptism), but these do not earn us the wage of salvation; these works are only our obedience, without which God cannot extend His mercy and grace.
10. **sign** *n.* – (Gk. *say mi' on*) B: a mark or token which distinguishes one person or thing from another; a symbol (in this case, circumcision) of being God's child under the law of Moses.
11. **promise** *n.* – (Gk. *ep ang el ee' ah*) A: announcement of a pledge, especially a divine assurance; to give one's word.
12. **seed** *n.* – (Gk. *sper' mah*) B: offspring, descendants, posterity, those who by right of lieage are heirs; Abraham's "seed" are the faithful who have become God's children, during all of the time since he became "the father of the faithful".
13. **law** *n.* – (Gk. *nom' os*) C: "the" law, having reference to the ordinances given by God through Moses.
14. **weak** *pred. adj.* – (Gk. *as then eh' o*) A: to be feeble, impotent.
15. **deadness** *n.* – (Gk. *nek' ro sis*) B: the state of being dead, without power.
16. **staggered** *v.* – (Gk. *dee ak ree' no*) C: to withdraw from, to waver.
17. **offenses** *n.* – (Gk. *par ap' to mah*) A: unintentional error or wilful transgression.

Vocabulary Scale

- 7-10 correctGood
 11-13 correct.....Bible Student
 14-17 correct.....Bible Scholar

The Power of ONE Word



Owen Cosgrove

When Martin Luther broke ties with the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, the last thing in the world that he wanted to do was to start another religion. His great yearning and desire was to reform the apostate church and to bring it back to the pristine beauty of the Scriptures.

When he denied the supremacy of the pope and church councils, saying that they often contradicted each other and themselves, he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X. In his trials at Worms, Germany, he refused to repu-

THE WORD OF GOD

diate anything he had said unless it could be proved to be contrary to the Scriptures and to reason. When Charles V of Germany placed him under imperial ban, his friend, Fredric the Elector, kept him in hiding for ten months. During this time he translated the New Testament, a monumental work that immortalized the German language and set the nation free religiously.

The doctrine of **SUPEREROGATION**, driving oneself unmercifully to try to earn salvation, was so repugnant to him that he went to the other extreme, declaring that a person is saved by faith alone without any activity on his own part. Luther, a brilliant scholar with a doctorate in theology, became so obsessed with his belief in salvation by faith only that it predominated his thinking.

When he translated Romans 3:28, "*We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,*" his prejudice overcame his scholarship and he inserted the word **ONLY**: "*We conclude that a man is justified by faith **ONLY** without the deeds of the law.*" Someone soon noted that James 2:24 directly contradicted his dogma: "*You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by*

faith only." Luther's reaction was to reject the entire book of James, calling it "an epistle of straw."

What a difference one word can make when it is added to the word of God — even with the best of intentions. No wonder God forbids our adding one thing to or taking one thing away from His word. Even one word is too much.

Of course, Luther's translation, if applied consistently, would rule out repentance, confession, baptism, giving, prayer, study, attendance, the Lord's Supper, morality, and every other commandment of the New Testament as having anything to do with our salvation. They would all be claimed as results of salvation instead of conditions.

Many verses speak of salvation by faith. None speaks of salvation by faith **only**. Oh, what a difference one word can make! Think what could have been done with the Ten Commandments by changing just one word in each one! What a difference Satan's ONE word made when he spoke to Eve! That is why God's Word must not be tampered with. Let the Bible speak, and let us obey. †

Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and preaches for the Northside Church of Christ in Waxahachie, Texas, U.S.A.

The price for our freedom from sin was paid in blood.

Rightly Dividing

The Word Of Truth

Don L. Norwood

How does one rightly divide the word of truth? What does this mean exactly? In the American Standard Version the translation reads: "*Handling aright the word of truth.*" This is the idea that one handle God's word, the truth (John 17:17), in the right manner.

The Bible contains the revealed mind of God; shows the actual state of mankind as he stands before God; it explains the way of salvation for mankind; it predicts the doom of sinners who will not repent; the happiness of believers; and all who will handle it aright will be wise, safe, and holy. Christ is the grand central theme of the Bible; human good is its design, and the objective is to glorify God.

One way to mishandle the word of God is to teach something in substitution for what the word actually teaches (Example: Matthew 15:1-13). Another way to mishandle the word is to take a word or a sentence

out of its context and force it to teach something other than what it actually teaches.

To properly understand the word we need to consider the following questions:

- ▲ Who is speaking in the portion that we are reading?
- ▲ To whom is the portion of scripture speaking?
- ▲ At what time in history is the scripture speaking?
- ▲ Under what dispensation of time is this being written or spoken?

When one properly considers these things the scripture will always reveal what and to whom it is speaking.

The Bible has two main divisions:

- Old Testament — which contains thirty-nine (39) books:
 - 5 books of the law
 - 12 books of history
 - 5 books known as poetry,

THE WORD OF GOD

17 connected generally with prophecy

● New Testament has twenty-seven (27) books:

4 gospel accounts

1 book of history

21 letters

1 book of prophecy

The Bible covers three dispensations of time:

❖ Patriarchal — God spoke to the heads of families and revealed His will to them individually.

❖ Mosaical — God made a covenant with the nation of Israel and through Moses the mediator, God gave them a written law. This law separated them from all other nations, as God's chosen people through whom Christ would come into the world in the flesh. From the time the law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai until Christ died upon the cross, this Mosaical dispensation was in effect. It covered about fifteen hundred years of time.

❖ Christian. — This age began when Christ died upon the cross, fulfilling the Old Testament and replacing it with the New Testament (Colossians 2:11-14, Galatians 3:19-29). The Christian dispensation will end when Christ comes again to end time and execute the judgment of all mankind (2 Peter 3:1-18).

Whether recognizing Christ as the Messiah or not, the whole world is under the Christian dispensation of time now. This means that it is imperative that people everywhere in the world learn and obey the gospel of Christ in order to become reconciled unto God and to have the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven (Acts 17:30,31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Mark 16:15,16; 1 Peter 4:17,18).

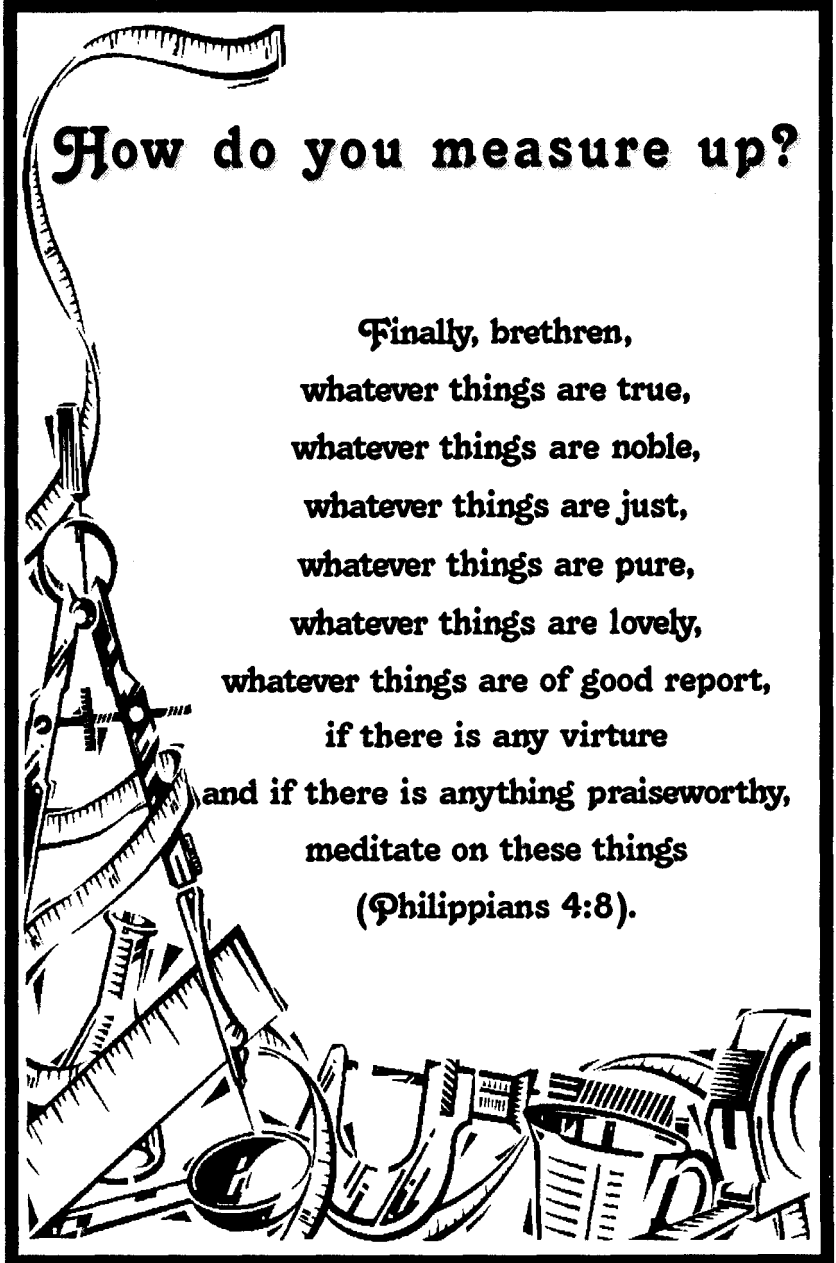
The knowledge that Christ and His Apostles imparted to mankind through the scriptures of the New Testament includes all that pertains to life and godliness, all that a human being needs to guide him through his life on earth and to an eternal home with God (2 Peter 1:3). †

Don L. Norwood is involved in full-time missionary work in behalf of the country of India.

The Word of God

For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God —
Naught else is worth believing.
I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever;
For, though all things
shall pass away,
His word shall stand forever.

— Unknown



How do you measure up?

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

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Jesus' relationship with His Father also reveals God's expectation of His children. It all comes down to one word: *obedience*.

A brief survey of John's Gospel illustrates how Jesus related to the Father. Jesus often mentioned that He depended on the Father and that He came "to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

"I seek not to please myself," Jesus said, "but him who sent me" (John 5:30).

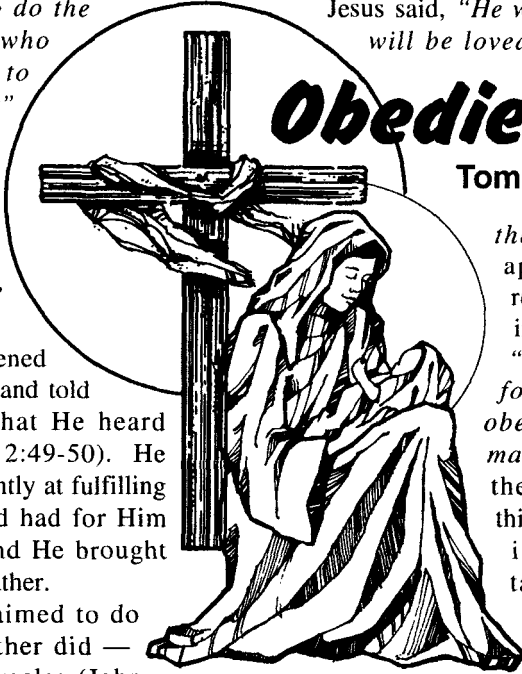
Jesus listened to His Father and told the world what He heard (John 8:26; 12:49-50). He worked diligently at fulfilling the work God had for Him (John 9:4) and He brought glory to the Father.

Jesus claimed to do what His Father did — including miracles (John 10:37-38). Because He loved the Father, He did exactly what God commanded Him to do (John 14:31). Jesus tied love and obedience together in John 15:9-10: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will

remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."

Jesus said that the key to remaining in His love is obedience, and He has modeled obedience for us in showing us how He related to His Father. Further, in John 14:21

Jesus said, "He who loves me will be loved by my Fa-



Obedience

Tom Kelton

ther." The apostle John reiterated this in 1 John 5:3, "This is love for God: to obey his commands." Lest the readers think this is an impossible task, John added an important qualifier:

"And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world." The message is clear: **to know the love of our heavenly Father, we must be obedient sons and daughters.**

How important is obedience to the Christian life? Peter explained

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

that we have been chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood" (1 Peter 1:2). All three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in this remarkable verse. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have orchestrated our redemption, through His blood, so that we may be obedient to Christ.

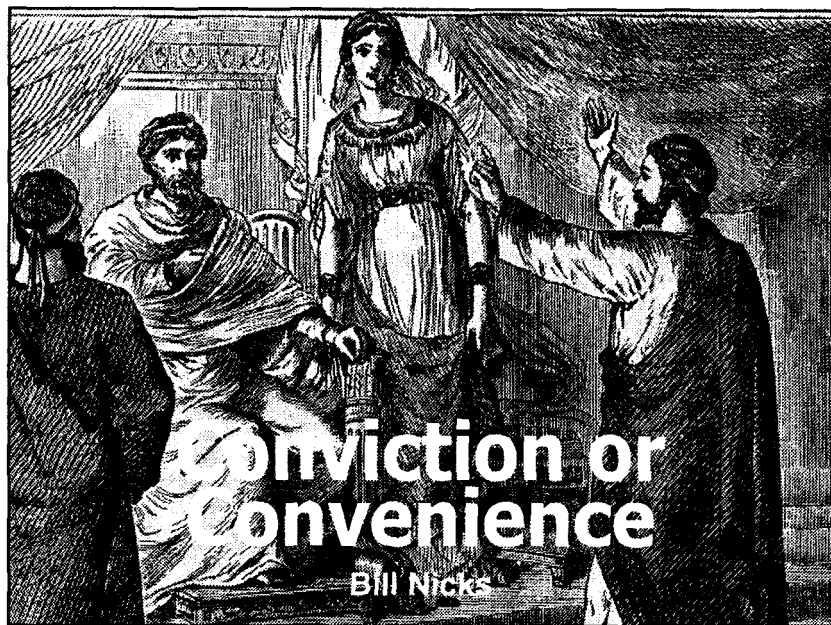
... He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).

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

No one will enter the heavenly kingdom who is not obedient to Christ. Therefore, let us strive with all our beings to learn, to understand, and to do the will of the One who was obedient to death, even death on the cross. †

Tom Kelton, now deceased, was one of the original staff writers for *The Voice of Truth International*.

*"Submit?" "Obey?" "Head humbly bowed?"
Those words don't fit the scene of "now".
A brainwashed world, denying God,
Defying God, decrying God,
Has placed itself upon that throne
And bows before itself alone.
Mired in sin, and blind and deaf.
Who will save it from itself? - BBC*



Conviction or Convenience

Bill Nicks

When the apostle Paul stood before the governor Felix, as recorded in Acts 24, he preached to him of *“righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.”* Paul had been brought to Caesarea after being charged by some Jews in Jerusalem of being a seditious, *“a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”* Further, they said, he had profaned the temple. None of these charges had been sustained. Their misstatements of fact had been made out of hearts filled with hatred and bitter prejudice.

When one preaches the same truths Paul preached, he will often be accused, ridiculed and charged

falsely. The truth has many enemies. But no amount of persecution could persuade Paul to give up his convictions.

Felix had been governor of Judea for six years. He must have known what the hope of the Jews was. He knew more than Jews gave him credit for knowing. He kept Paul in prison but allowed his friends to minister to him (Acts 24:22ff). With his unlawful wife, Drusilla, he sent for Paul later to hear him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. It is commendable for men to want to know about Christ. It seems his desire was more out of curiosity than love for the truth.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

When Paul preached to him of righteousness, self control and the judgment, he must have told him that all men, even kings and governors, must obey the gospel and enter the kingdom of God to be saved. He must have told him about the peculiar life a Christian must live, that he must bridle his passions and lusts, which thing neither Felix nor Drusilla had done.

When Paul reminded them they would have to give account at judgment, Felix was terrified. This was evidently the beginnings of repentance, but he was not willing to "break off his sins by righteousness." His answer was, "*Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.*" He had no abiding convictions that God meant what He said, therefore he made the wrong choice. Those today who are looking for the convenient time to obey the gospel, serve the Lord, and live righteously, will never, like Felix, find the time nor the season to accomplish what is best for them.

To please the Lord, we must have convictions based on truth which is in harmony with all God has spoken. If we are so convicted, His commands will be so meaningful that we shall do them in spite of the inconvenience to us.

Seeking personal ease and comfort has never pleased the Lord.

"*Woe to them that are at ease in Zion*" (Amos 6:1). All acceptable servants of God have in all ages had strong convictions. Faith in Hebrews 11:1 is described as "*conviction of things not seen.*" The word "convinced" carries with it the idea of having a firm and settled belief.

But that belief must be guided by the *truth*, and if one learns further about the truth that his former convictions were not in harmony with the will of God, as revealed in His truth, he should, like Paul, give them up for the sake of the "*unsearchable riches of Christ.*"

Everyone must have convictions. We respect those with strong convictions. It is unthinkable that Christ or Paul would say, "**It does not matter what we believe, or what church we belong to, or whether we have been baptized into Christ.**" Nor would they have condoned drunkenness, adultery, or gambling.

If we are true men of God, we will stand for that which is right regardless of whether people brand us "narrow", or "old-fashioned". Let us not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but have convictions, and "*having done all, to stand.*" †

Bill Nicks is a missionary working with churches of Christ in Trinidad.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY



Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is *not* getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we could *never* deserve. The Hebrews writer speaks of the “*throne of God*” and calls it a “*throne of grace.*” The child of God is urged to come to the throne of God in time of need, that he might find “*mercy and help*” (Hebrews 4:14-16). In fact, we are urged, “*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

Many fail to realize that mercy is the mode of God’s actions toward each person. It is the mode of the Divine goodness even to the evil and the unworthy. Because we have sinned and have come short of the glory of God, we desperately need the mercy of God. When sin became a reality, mercy became a necessity. Mercy implies the suspending of censure or condemnation to people who justly deserve to receive the same. No

sinner wants what he deserves. In time of need (testing, failing, etc.) no person wants what he deserves. And more wonderful still, the compassionate God desires that we in our weakness and desperate need receive His mercy and grace. He is a kind and compassionate God who desires to deal gently and forgivingly with each person. God’s desire is the bestowing of His mercy and grace.

No one merits the blessing of God’s mercy; in our transgressions we have forfeited our standing, and we deserve His wrath. We can lay no claim to *the right of God’s mercy*, but we *can* receive it. Not only can we receive mercy, we can *live* in God’s mercy. In and through Christ the child of God can even “*come boldly unto the throne of grace.*” God’s mercy stands to enable us to be confident in our walk with Him, even (especially) in our times of need. †

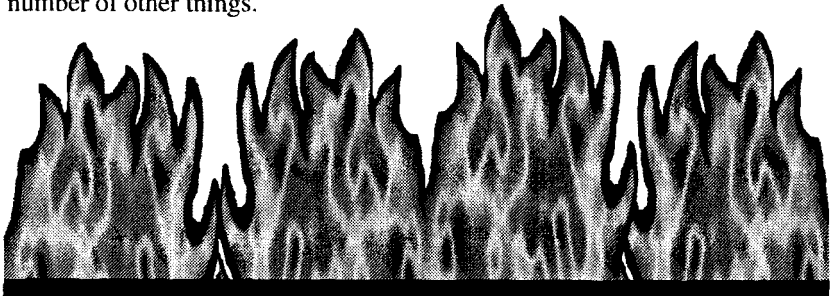
Ron Bryant preaches for the Camelback church in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The teaching that once one has been truly pardoned by the Lord there is nothing that he/she can do to jeopardize that saved condition is a consol-ing doctrine. There is only one problem, i.e., it is not what God's Word teaches.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20). Note that this passage is addressed to **saved** people, Christians, members of the family of God. We know this because James refers to them as "brethren." The verse states that one who is saved may "err from the truth." It is further evident that one in such conditions needs to be converted, and if he is not converted after "erring" from the truth, his soul will die. This cannot be the first death, for all will die (Hebrews 9:27). Therefore, the passage must refer to the second death. This second death is described in the Bible as follows: *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death"* (Revelation 20:14).

These who have so departed can be "converted." Paul states, *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"* (Galatians 6:1). In our effort at restoration, it is helpful to know what caused their fall. It would originate from a number of things including: (1) discouragement, (2) a lack of spiritual growth, (3) cares of this world, (4) the deceitfulness of riches, (5) the lust of other things, (6) negligence, (7) hurt feelings, (8) being envious of the wicked, (10) pride, or a number of other things.



Can a Christian be Lost?

Jerry Jenkins

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

How are such to return? By repentance, confession, and prayer. *"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). *"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"* (Acts 8:22).

God is concerned about His erring children today. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. When the ancient prodigal came home, a party was given. This demonstrates the great concern God has for each of His children who have gone astray.

Will you think seriously of your relationship with God? Will you realize the spiritual famine now in your life, and your lost condition away from the fellowship with the church and God? Will you say, as the prodigal of long ago, *"I will arise and go to my father"*? If you will, there will be great rejoicing in heaven, in your heart, and in your home.

David said, *"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments"* (Psalm 119:59,60). †

Jerry Jenkins preaches the Gospel of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, U.S.A.

What Will Your Answer Be?

"Tomorrow," he promised his conscience,
"Tomorrow I mean to believe;
Tomorrow I'll think as I ought to,
Tomorrow my Savior receive.
Tomorrow I'll conquer the habits
That hold me from heaven away."
But ever his conscience repeated
One word, and one only, "Today!"

Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow —
Thus, day after day, it went on,
Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow —
Till youth like a vision was gone;
Till age and his passions had
written
The message of fate on his brow,
And forth from the shadows
came death
With pitiless syllable, "Now!"

What will you do with Jesus?
The call comes low and clear;
The solemn words are sounding
Now in your listening ear.
Immortal life is in question
And joy through eternity,
Then what will you do with Jesus?
Oh, what will your answer be?

— Unknown

Was Jesus Culture-Sensitive?

Joe C. Magee

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

There is a great deal being said and written today about the necessity of the church making itself more compatible to the culture in which we live. This may be one way of saying, "Lord, come unto us on our terms, and make our burdens light, but let us choose our own yokes." They argue that Christianity of the first century will not fit the culture of the present century, and certainly not the upcoming century with all its promised changes and social developments.

Let's look at the culture into which Christianity made its bold and energetic entrance and see if culture really had the influence upon the church as some would have it to be today.

First, let us look at Greece.

Demosthenes (*Against Naeaeera* 122) sets out what he takes to be the rule of life. He was not condemning, but simply setting forth what was the normal day-today practice: "We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for day-to-day needs of the body; we keep wives to be the mothers of our children and the guardians of our home." In Greece, premarital and extra marital relationships were the norm, an accepted part of life.

Second, a look at Rome. Broadly speaking, there was no process of divorce; all a husband had to do was to tell his wife to go. In that world, the woman was a thing, not a person, and had no legal rights. Seneca said that women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married (*De Beneficiis* 3.116). Juvenal tells of a woman who had eight husbands in five years (*Juvenal, Satires* 6.230). Jerome tells of one woman who was married to her twenty-third husband, she being his twenty-first wife (*Letters* 2).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Third, a look at the Jewish world. Divorce was a much more serious matter. The Jewish law was clear. In Deuteronomy 24, if a wife found no favor in the eyes of her husband because he had found some uncleanness in her, he could write her a bill of divorcement and she would be free to marry anyone who would have her. Jesus might have said, "Because of the hardness of your heart Moses permitted a law of divorcement and in this present day culture it would be better just to leave things as they are." But this isn't what He said. Read Matthew 5:34; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18. What Jesus said in answer to the Jews' question concerning divorce transcended all cultures and returned to the principle set forth in Eden.

"He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.'

"His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.'

"But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given:

For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it'" (Matthew 19:8).

On the subject of women's role in the church, some argue that the apostle Paul was yielding to the culture of his time, a time that suppressed the values of the female gender. But we see Paul transcending all cultures and returning to the principle set forth before there were any cultures *"And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression"* (1 Timothy 2:12,13). Obviously Paul understood the greater value of women and their role as God would have it.

If Christianity had been woven into the fabric of first century culture, it would have lost its identity within one generation. As William Ralph Inge put it, "The church that is married to the spirit of its age will be a widow in the next." †

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FROM CONDEMNATION TO EXALTATION

SUNNY DAVID

Sin is man's greatest problem. From the beginning, from the time of Adam and Eve, all men have sinned. No, *no one is born with sin*. Just as Adam and Eve were created in the beginning without sin; so is everyone born into the world without sin, with a sinless soul. But *all have sinned*, says the Bible, in Romans 3:23; and everyone sins by own choice (James 1:14,15).

The Bible also says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), because sin separates man from God. That separation is called death, which, in fact, is spiritual alienation of man from God.

All accountable beings, men and women, boys and girls, have sinned in the eyes of God. *Wherever there is man, there is sin*. Sin and man coexist. Sin resides in the heart and mind of an individual.

Says Proverbs 4:23: "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*" Christ taught, "*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adul-*

teries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man" (Mathew 15:19). John, the apostle, wrote: "*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer*" (I John 3:15). "*You have heard,*" said Christ again, "*that it was said to those of old, 'you shall not commit adultery.'*" But *I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Mathew 5:27-28).

So, when we look at sin from this standpoint, we know that it is definitely true that all accountable beings — men, women, boys and girls, who know the difference between right and wrong, except little children — are sinners because all have entertained evil thoughts in their mind or heart, and have fallen to the temptation to do wrong.

Therefore, from God's standard, all are under condemnation because of sin.

The condemnation that sin brings is hell, the lake of fire and

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

brimstone which burns eternally.

No wonder God in heaven was so concerned about humans on earth. His concern was natural because He had created humans in His *"own image and after His own likeness"* (Genesis 1:26-27). We are, Acts 17:29 says, *"the offspring of God."*

To save and redeem man from sin and its consequences, God sent His Word from heaven to earth. That was Jesus Christ, who assumed flesh, by the power of God and became a man (John 1:1,2,14). Through His death of the cross, He became the propitiation or atoning payment for the sins of the world (I John 1:1,2 & 4:10). The Bible says, when Christ was dying on the cross that God was *in Christ* reconciling the world to Himself; not imputing their trespasses to them. In fact, the Bible tells us that on the cross, God had made Christ — who knew no sin — to be made sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:19,21).

Because God has done this greatest and most wonderful thing, the Bible says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..."* (Romans 8:1). Further, it says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become*

new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In Christ Jesus the individual becomes a new person; **Washed** of sins, because of the shed blood of Christ for sinners from the cross; **Sanctified**, or set apart to serve and live for God; **Justified**, his sins having been forgiven because of the propitiatory death of Christ; **Preserved**, to live undefiled in a sinful world (I Corinthians 6:11; Jude 1).

Now, in Christ, one does not walk or conduct himself according to the flesh, but walks according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. This guidance comes from the written word of God, as one reads, hears, meditates and follows His will (Romans 8:1; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21).

In this new relationship with God, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore, man's response should be to get into Christ as quickly as possible. How does one do that?

The best thing is to let the Bible speak. We read from Galatians 3:27: *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* The starting point of Christianity is the gospel, which is the death of Christ for sinners, His burial in the tomb, and His resurrection from the dead (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

When the first gospel meeting

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

was held on earth, in the city of Jerusalem, and the listeners had asked the preachers of the gospel: "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*", do you know what answer was given to them? They were told to "*Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:37-38). In the next verse of the cited Scripture we read that those who had gladly received the word — and their number was about three thousand — were baptized that day, and they were added to the nucleus of Apostles by the Lord Himself.

This was how the church of Christ had its beginning (Acts 2:41, 47). The preachers had told the audience that they were under the

condemnation of sin and that Christ had died to redeem them. This led them to believe in Christ, and to ask what they should do to be forgiven. When they were told to repent and be baptized, they immediately, and, yes, gladly, obeyed, to *put on Christ* or *to get into Christ*, where there is no condemnation.

Every human being on earth is either *in Christ* or *outside of Christ*. Those who are outside of Christ are under condemnation. But, the promise has been made that those who are in Christ are under *no condemnation*, but are blessed, not only in this life, but also in the eternal life which is to come (Revelation 14:13). †

Sunny David is the editor of *The Bible Teacher*, a monthly magazine published in New Delhi, India.

Where Are You?

In the World:
Outside of Christ

Baptized INTO
Confess
Repent
Believe
Hear

In Christ

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Matthew 12:36

i.e.,
the following com-
ments of Jesus refer to the
previous flippant and preju-
diced teaching of the Pharisees,
attributing Jesus' merciful
works to the power of
Satan.

The
authority of His word
which was repeated so often
in the Sermon on the Mount is
repeated once again. See
Matthew 7:24; Hebrews
1:1,2.

**But I say unto you,
That every idle word
that men shall speak,
they shall give account
thereof in the day of
judgment.**

Psalms
139:2:
*Thou understandest my
thought afar off.*
V. 4: *For there is not a word
in my tongue, but, lo, O
LORD, Thou knowest
it altogether.*

Revelation 20:12:
*And I saw the dead,
small and great,
stand before God;
and the books were
opened; and another
book was opened,
which is the book of
life: and the dead
were judged out of
those things which
were written in the
books, according to
their works.*

Romans
14:12: *So then
every one of us
shall give account
of himself to
God.*

See also 1 Peter 4:5.

This
idle talk is
not mere slang
expressions.
Here, it is ungodly
denial of truth in an
effort to dissuade
souls from seeing
the truth, as the
Pharisees were
doing. See
James 3:1.

Fenter Northern

The Uniqueness Of Baptism

T. Pierce Brown

It is true that when the Apostles preached to sinners, we never find a sermon which could be properly entitled, "Baptism". That has led some to conclude, "We should preach Christ and forget about baptism." That conclusion is unwarranted for the simple reason that in the New Testament record, *no one ever preached Christ without emphasizing baptism!* We need to understand the uniqueness of baptism.

* **Baptism is unique in that it is mentioned in every case of conversion recorded in the New Testament.** As important as faith and repentance are, they are not mentioned in every case, but baptism is.

* **Baptism is unique in the prominence given it in other ways.** All four Gospel records mention that Jesus was baptized.

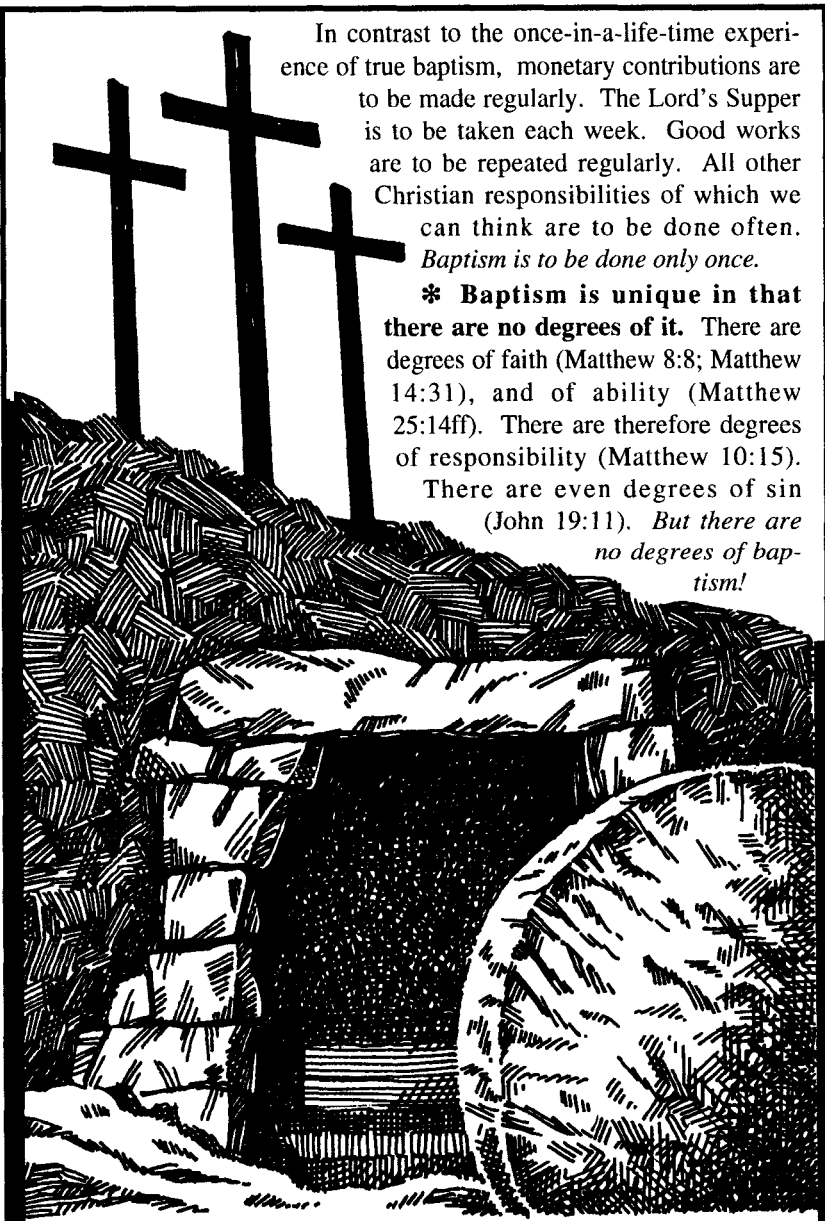
Its prominence is indicated in the fact that Jesus had just said, "*All authority has been given to Me. . .*" when He commanded baptism (Matthew 28:18,19). That command is among His last recorded

words. If you were at the bedside of your father when he died, his last words to you would probably be prominent in your memory.

That command's prominence is shown by the contrast between those who accepted and those who rejected it. Luke 7:29,30 shows that the Scribes and Pharisees thus rejected the counsel of God against themselves, as did Felix, Agrippa, and all wicked men who rebelled against the authority of God. In contrast, Acts 2:41 shows that those who gladly received His Word were baptized. That number eventually included Paul, Cornelius, the Philippian jailer, and all others who wanted to do the will of Christ.

* **Baptism is unique in the fact that it needs to be done only once, if it is scripturally done in the first place.** Not every baptism is by the right authority, and for the right purpose (Acts 19:1-6). These factors determine whether the procedure of being immersed in water is actually in compliance with the word of God.

SALVATION

A black and white illustration of three crosses on a hillside. The crosses are simple wooden structures. In the foreground, there is a stone structure, possibly a tomb or a well, with a large, rounded opening. The background is a dark, textured hillside. The overall style is a high-contrast, woodcut-like illustration.

In contrast to the once-in-a-life-time experience of true baptism, monetary contributions are to be made regularly. The Lord's Supper is to be taken each week. Good works are to be repeated regularly. All other Christian responsibilities of which we can think are to be done often. *Baptism is to be done only once.*

*** Baptism is unique in that there are no degrees of it.** There are degrees of faith (Matthew 8:8; Matthew 14:31), and of ability (Matthew 25:14ff). There are therefore degrees of responsibility (Matthew 10:15). There are even degrees of sin (John 19:11). *But there are no degrees of baptism!*

SALVATION

* **Baptism is unique in the extent to which it is based on faith instead of human reasoning.** One can, by human logic and reasoning, see why Hebrews 11:6 is true. *“Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.”*

One can logically conclude that a person must repent of his sins before he can get rid of them. One could even logically conclude that if a person were unwilling to confess his faith in Christ, Christ would not confess him (Matthew 10:32).

However, baptism is almost entirely an act of faith, for one could scarcely understand merely by human wisdom *why* it is required. Understanding is not difficult, though, when one thoughtfully reads Romans 6 and sees how *baptism demonstrates faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.* Furthermore, it indicates, as nothing else could, *the willingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ and be identified and united with Him.* It is for remission of sins, for at that moment it symbolically brings us into contact with His blood, which was shed in His death. However, *human reasoning* could not tell us these things. The knowledge must be based on *faith* in His revealed Word.

* **Baptism is unique in that it is the only way stated that one can get into Christ, where salvation is found** (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). Faith, repentance, and confession are things that bring us *unto* Christ and God, as Hebrews 11:6 suggests, *“He that cometh to God must believe that he is . . .”* Baptism is the act that *transfers us into* Christ.

* **Baptism is unique in that all the other steps are something that the individual *does*.** They are *active*. Baptism is something that is *done to the penitent believer*. He is *passive*. Those who claim we are saved by faith only and that nothing we can do has anything to do with our salvation are mistaken in at least three ways.

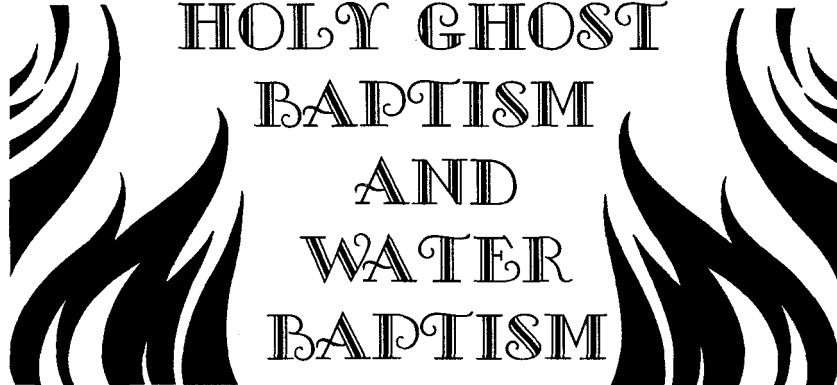
First, faith is something one *does*.

Second, even those who teach salvation by faith only admit that *repentance* is necessary. One cannot be saved by *faith only* if one also has to repent.

Third, baptism is not a work you do, but *an act of submission* in which something is done to you and *for* you.

Baptism is indeed unique in many ways. If this study helps you to see the value of obeying the Lord in baptism, we shall be grateful. †

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HOLY GHOST BAPTISM AND WATER BAPTISM

Basil Overton

The Lord said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). Some say they believe that "baptism" saves, but that it is "Holy Ghost baptism" that saves. But, the baptism of the foregoing scripture is not "Holy Ghost baptism," but water baptism. Not very many people were ever baptized with the Holy Ghost. The twelve apostles, and Cornelius and his household were overwhelmed, or baptized with the Holy Ghost. (See Acts 1:1-6; 2:1-5; 11:15.) Baptism in the Holy Ghost was such a rare occurrence even in the days of the apostles that Peter was amazed at its occurrence at the house of Cornelius. The fact that Peter said that the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and his household, "*as on us at the beginning,*" is evidence that it was not a common event (Acts 11:15). (The "beginning" was

the Day of Pentecost; the "beginning" of the Christian dispensation; the beginning of the church.) If Holy Ghost baptism was a common event, why did not Peter compare the case at the house of Cornelius with cases more recent than the one that had happened about ten years before in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost?

Holy Ghost baptism was designed for special purposes in the apostolic age. By it, the apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13). By it, Jews were convinced that Gentiles were Gospel subjects (Acts 10:45). No one was ever baptized with the Holy Ghost in order to be saved. The Lord saves men when they follow the directions of the Holy Ghost as given in the Bible. Holy Ghost baptism was a promise of the Father to certain ones for certain purposes (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5). The baptism of

SALVATION

the Great Commission of Christ (Mark 16:16) is a command of God to be obeyed by people that they may reach the blood of Christ and have their sins remitted (Acts 2:38). A thing cannot be a command and a promise both! Men were to administer the baptism of the Great Commission, and they did administer it, and it was baptism in water (Acts 8:35-39)! Only our Lord

administered Holy Ghost baptism (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33). Holy Ghost baptism had ceased when Paul wrote the Ephesian letter, which was about A.D. 64, for he said: "*There is one baptism,*" referring to water baptism (Ephesians 4:1-6). †

Basil Overton is the editor of *The World Evangelist* and lives in Florence, Alabama, U.S.A.

Can You Imagine This?

Paul saying, "We are *sprinkled* with Him by baptism...."

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Peter saying, "Baptism is not essential to salvation."

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us..." (1 Peter 3:21).

Christ saying, "He that believeth is saved and shall be baptized if he wants to."

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Ananias saying, "Baptism does not wash away one's sins."

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

James saying, "We are saved by faith alone."

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

Jesus saying, "The new birth is only a spiritual thing."

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

PUZZLE PAGE

The Book of 1 Peter for adults

The following types of people are mentioned in 1 Peter. Circle these words in the block of letters below. Then cross out all of the following letters: J, K, Q, Y, Z. Write the letters that are left on the lines to reveal a hidden verse.

ALIENS
ANGELS
APOSTLE
AUTHORITIES
BABIES
BROTHERHOOD

BUILDERS
CHILDREN
ELDERS
EXILES
GENTILES
GOVERNOR

HUSBAND
MASTERS
PRIESTHOOD
SHEPHERD
STEWARDS
WIVES

ZTJHEYKCHILDRENGQRAYSSYK
KSTEWARDSYWIVESKYWIZTKHJ
ERZYSQELDERSAJNKDGENTILES
QYTHZZYEJPRIESTHOODKFYLZQ
YMASTERSOKWERZKYJEXILESKF
AJYLQLKAUTHORITIESSBYZKQU
TTHUSBANDHANGELSEWORKDJOY
APOSTLEFYGOVERNORKJQYTZHK
EQYBUILDERSLKYOQYZRBABIES
DAJYBQZIDZKEBROTHERHOODSF
OSHEPHERDRALIENSEKVZEJRYKQ

-1 Peter 1:24-25

THE CHURCH

Carroll Sites

What is your first thought when you hear the word “church”? What is your definition of “church”? What role should the church play in the history of man? What does God intend the church to be? Just what is the church anyway? Plainly and simply — the Lord’s church is the Lord’s people. “**Ekklesia**” is the Greek word, meaning “**the called out**” — “**the assembly**” — when attached to the church of God — “**that which belongs to the Lord.**”

Alexander MacLaren observed, “The church is an anvil which has worn out many hammers.” From the pen of Henry Ward Beecher comes the thought, “The church is not a gallery for the exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones.” Really, the church is not a hotel for saints, but rather a hospital for sinners. “The Church with no great anguish on its heart has no great music on its lips” — Karl Barth. Jesus taught that His disciples are to be “*the salt of the earth*” — “*the light of the world*” (Matthew 5:14-16). Paul writes that the church is to be a “*shining light in the world*” (Philippians 2:15). Maybe E. C. McKenzie summed it up properly

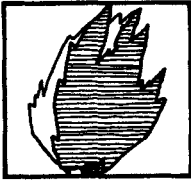
— “The world at its worst needs the church at its best.” You see, the church offers you something you simply cannot get elsewhere.

Someone observed, “All churches grow old, but some never grow up.” A church that is not reaching out to the lost and needy is passing out. The church is a workshop, not a dormitory. But many times, when all is said and done, more is said than done. The church desperately needs workers, not a wrecking crew.

The business of the church is to get rid of evil, not supervise it. However, if you and I were perfect, we could not belong. We are all sinners in need of the grace of God. As a place of worship, the church should be of such character that it will be easy for men to find God and difficult for them to forget Him.

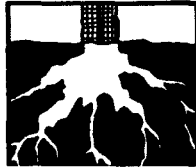
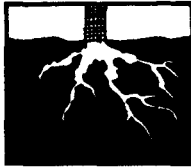
A sign in front of a Chicago church building said, “The competition is terrible, but we are still open for business.” And that’s the way it is! The church — pray for her...support her...and help to build her up. †

Carroll Sites serves as the preacher for the church of Christ located in Higden, Arkansas, U.S.A.



**God's
Word -**

The Seed of the Kingdom



**Jerry L.
Davidson**

Is it possible to have the same faith as the apostles and the first century Christians? Can we have unity among believers today as they had in the early church before the development of human creeds and denominationalism? Can we be Christians only and members of the same church established by Christ 2,000 years ago? Has God taken specific measures to preserve His church through the centuries? If so, how?

God, in His marvelous creation, established the principle of the seed as the means for propagating all living things. According to Genesis 1:11, "God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind,

whose seed is in itself, (emphasis mine) on the earth; and it was so." Living things depend upon the seed-law of the Creator. Where the seed is planted new life will come forth "after its kind."

The seed-law also holds true in the spiritual realm. God's Word is pictured in the Bible as reproductive seed.

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). The Word of God is absolutely necessary in the spiritual birth process.

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently

THE CHURCH

with a pure heart, having been born, not by corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:22,23). God's Word is clearly identified as the "seed" through which we are born again spiritually.

Jesus, in explaining the parable of the sower, said, "*Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God*" (Luke 8:11). It is apparent, then, that the Word of God is the propagating means of the kingdom, or church (Matthew 16:18,19).

Sometimes the question is asked, "Can you trace the church of Christ, through an unbroken line, all the way back to the first century?" In the sense of an unbroken line of descent, no, such a record was not kept. But in the sense that there have always been Bible-believing and Bible-practicing Christians to represent God in the world, yes, the church of Christ has continued to exist through the centuries.

How do we know? Because Christ Himself promised that His kingdom would never be destroyed, that even the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Matthew

16:18). Repeatedly in the prophetic statements of the Old Testament, the church or kingdom had been promised, with the stipulation that "*...it shall stand forever*" (Daniel 2:44; Joel 2:28; Isaiah 2:2,3).

On the other hand, because God has preserved the Seed — His Word — we can be assured that *anywhere* and *anytime*

that Word is sown in honest hearts, it will bring forth the same fruit it bore in the first century. As long as those two elements continue to exist in the world — God's seed-Word and honest human hearts — the church will also continue to exist

Is it possible to have the same faith today as the apostles and the first century Christians? Is it possible to be Christians only and members of the same church established by Christ 2,000 years ago?

Absolutely! With the Word of God as the true seed, we can have the same church, the same divine plan of salvation, the same worship, and the same hope of heaven as in the first century. †

Jerry L. Davidson is an instructor at International Bible College in Florence, Alabama, U.S.A.

"Can you trace the church of Christ, through an unbroken line, all the way back to the first century?"

Discerning The Difference

Frank Chesser

The church is divine in origin, spiritual in nature, and eternal in duration. It is a monument to divine wisdom. It is a portrait of beauty and simplicity beyond the Rembrandts of the ages.

Sin drove a wedge between man and God. The church is the sphere of reconciliation. It was God's will from eternity to unite all men *"in one body by the cross"* (Ephesians 2:16). That one body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Jesus saves only the church (Ephesians 5:23) because it is composed of those who have obeyed the Gospel (Acts 2), God's only power to save (Romans 1:16). There are as many saved people outside the church as there were outside the ark in Noah's day.

If ancient Israel was the *"apple of God's eye"* (Deuteronomy 32:10), what must the church be but the joy of His heart! Even now, God awaits the moment when time shall give way to eternity, and the church, His Son's bride, robed in the beauty of holiness by virtue of His Son's blood, shall make its entrance into that heavenly realm to the enjoyment of eternal bliss and happiness.

Denominationalism is human in origin, physical in nature, and temporal in duration. It is a monument to human self-will, man's determination to do what he pleases instead of what God says. It is a portrait of chaos and confusion, a tool in the hand of the Devil to blind the *"minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them"* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Jesus did not plant denominationalism and it *"shall be rooted up"* (Matthew 15:13). Its worship is ostentatious and mechanical, its kingdom hope is material, and its laws are ritualistic and traditional. David said, *"I hate every false way"* (Psalm 119:128). Let us love the people, but loathe the system. Israel was to discern between things holy and profane (Ezekiel 22:26). Christians need to perceive the grave distinction between the church set forth in the New Testament and denominationalism. There is a difference. †

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Panama Street Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A.

What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?

Clayton Pepper



Questions that Arise

1. Why have we suffered a crisis in **our growth rate**?
2. Why are we suffering from a crisis of **ineffectiveness**?
3. Has our **Bible school literature** and teaching program failed in preparing the church for its mission?
4. Have we failed in **training preachers** who would teach and lead us into the fields to reach the lost?
5. Are our **non-outreach programs** on which we once relied for reaching the lost now ineffective?
6. Are our **Christian colleges**, which have been looked to as a major source of help for the church, now without answers?
7. The biggest question is: "**Do we understand our problem enough to identify it?**"

CHURCH GROWTH

Many chastising clichés are heard from brethren who see a problem, but it seems beyond their grasp to adequately define it or solve it. Hundreds of lectures are being given at workshops and lectureships, yet only a few believe and respond to the message. The zeal of these few runs counter to the indifference and apathy of the majority. *Even the first century method of house to house evangelism so zealously practiced by the early church is looked upon with suspicion and doubt by many* (Acts 5:42). “Bus evangelism” or almost any change of methods is viewed with suspicion and doubt. Why? Are there any real explanations for these problems?

For several years answers have been sought as to why the church is so *unevangelistic, in spite of the fact that the final and great command of our Savior to His people was, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature...”* (Mark 16:15).

Conclusion # 1: The means have become the end.



Like many others, I had formed many conclusions. **One of my conclusions is that the means to be used in achieving the mission have become ends.** Some of this confusion is seen in the concept that there are *three* missions: evangelism, benevolence, and edifying the church. Actually, there is only *one* mission — evangelism— and benevolence and edification occur within the efforts and as a natural result of evangelism.

Conclusion # 2: We have majored in defending the faith and minored in advancing it.



My second conclusion has been that we have **majored in defending the faith and minored in advancing it**, and that these two things most reflect our problems. I am not minimizing the importance of sound doctrine. Of course we must not deviate from the truth, but we must never forget that **to HOLD to the truth and to PROCLAIM the truth are two entirely different things.** In recent years we have done far more of *holding* than we have of *proclaiming!*

CHURCH GROWTH

It was not until I was doing some research for a college lectureship that I read of a growth and decline cycle in movements. Some who have studied growth cycles describe four points in the cycle. They conclude that any great movement, political, religious or otherwise, would ultimately move from its dedicated commitment to a cause to deterioration. It may die or be revived and return to the purposes of its founder. The period of years for this to occur may vary from a short period of time to perhaps 150-200 years. This concept offered to me considerable insight into our growth problem. It helped me to place on the cycle the two major conclusions that I had already reached. The cycle of growth and decline that I want to share is a combination of my own conclusions and others learned through research.

The Apostles' priorities.



Since we, as the church, are a continuation of the family begun on Pentecost, in the first century, we must pattern ourselves after that church if we are to remain the same. Jesus' instructions to the men He had trained were to go with His gospel, to be evangelistic, to reach the lost. The birth of the church was marked by the initial preaching of that gospel, and the days and weeks following were filled with evangelistic fervor on the part of the apostles as well as the other Christians. Nothing was more important than spreading the good news of salvation. Because of that fervor, multitudes were added to that infant church.

When a benevolent need arose, the apostles, said, "*Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word*" (Acts 6:3,4).

The hungry were fed, but *not at the expense of lost souls*. **Prayer always accompanies great evangelistic accomplishments.** The apostles realized their dependence upon God. They were only earthen vessels through whom God was working. The primary task of God's people is getting the gospel to the lost. The apostles would not be turned away from that task in order to take care of benevolent needs in the church.

Two of the seven who were chosen to help with this work were Stephen

CHURCH GROWTH

and Philip. Though they had been selected to take care of physical needs, they were not men who thought only of the body and forgot the soul. Stephen zealously preached Christ and was stoned to death because of it (Acts 7). Philip went to Samaria and preached. Many were converted (Acts 8). These men had their priorities right and had great commitment to reaching the lost with the gospel.

On the way to reach the lost, the early church did benevolence, not on the way to do benevolence they happened to win a few lost souls! *Benevolence is not an end* when administered to the lost, but *a means to an end* of reaching them for Christ. Though more attention is given today to benevolent acts toward the world in general, in the New Testament era the greater emphasis was upon taking the gospel to the world, while looking after emergency physical needs within the church. Today, a far greater outpouring of funds would be made to help earthquake or hurricane victims than to help sin victims. In this, our priorities are not the same as the Apostles'.



Edification resulted in multiplication in the early church.

Luke writes, "... the churches... throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria... were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31). There was a relationship between *what they were taught* and *growth*. **One preacher said a few years ago that he looked through ten years of one kind of adult Bible school literature for information on soul winning and could not find enough to preach one sermon!** Where evangelism isn't taught, it won't be practiced. This principle should be recognized today. **In most congregations where there is little preaching, teaching and leading in evangelism, there is little growth through souls being added to the church.**

God's kind of edification will result in multiplication. Paul wrote, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also... the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach..." 2 Timothy 2:2,24. †

Clayton Pepper works with Restoration Network International in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.



Tips for an Effective Visitation Program

Compiled by Clayton Pepper

If a visitation program is to be successful, the leadership of the congregation must be fully convinced not only of its necessity but also of its effectiveness. Then a plan and a training program must be enacted, so that each member will have confidence in his/her ability to do the work.

Visits to New Members

A. Why should you visit new members?

1. Show how happy we are about their decisions, and how we love and appreciate them.
2. Develop close fellowship (old and strong ties may be in their work or in a denomination).
3. Make them feel a part of the family of God.
4. Lend encouragement, answer any questions.
5. Make appointment to show, "Now That I Am A Christian" filmstrips.

B. How do you make this type of call?

1. Have warm, friendly get-acquainted visit — make them glad they are Christians and let them see Christ in you.

CHURCH GROWTH

2. Assure them of the wonderful decision they have made — boost the church to them, by enlarging their understanding of its purpose and uniqueness.
3. Invite them to your house for a meal.
4. Set up an appointment to show the “Now That I Am A Christian” films.

C. *What are you to accomplish?*

1. Strengthen the new Christian.
2. Develop an enduring friendship.
3. See that they are given something to do. While their zeal is great, show them how they may help you lead their friends to Christ.
4. Do further teaching.

Visits to Absentees

A. *Why should you visit absentees?*

1. They are in danger of drifting away.
2. They need to be strengthened by other Christians.
3. God said do it (Galatians 6:1).
4. Determine the cause and try to correct it.

B. *How do you make the call?*

1. By your genuine warmth, let them know they were missed.
2. State concern for their absence and exhort concerning faithfulness.
3. Invite them into your home for a meal; develop a helping relationship.
4. Show appropriate films if they have not seen them and/or study the Bible with them.

C. *What are you to accomplish?*

1. Strengthen the weak.
2. Get them to become regular in attendance.
3. Lead them to become workers for Christ.

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Visits to Delinquent Members

A. Why should you visit delinquent members?

1. Because they are in error and will be lost unless restored.

B. How do you make the call?

1. Express interest in them and concern for them.
2. Try to find out why they have become delinquent
3. Discuss their problems in the light of the scriptures.
4. Show the Jule Miller filmstrips and "Day a Church Member Died" or "Way Home".
5. Have them into your home for a meal.
6. Refer to elders if unsuccessful.

C. What are you to accomplish?

1. Restore the erring members.
2. Strengthen yourself so that you will be less likely ever to fall. †

Before you go...

Proper preparation prior to making personal evangelism calls cannot be stressed too much. **Be sure that you**

- Spend quality time in prayer for yourself and the person you plan to visit.
- Consider what you may say, the approach you may make in helping the person to realize the seriousness of his/her commitment to Christ.
- Study God's word daily, to grow in your knowledge of the Scriptures, so that you will be ready always to give a biblical answer to the questions that may be asked.

CHURCH GROWTH AND SERVING A PURPOSE

Lewis G. Hale

All church leaders are concerned with church growth. In most cases, when a church fails to grow, the preacher is held accountable. It would seem that he *should* be a factor in the spiritual condition of the church.

When a careful study is made of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3, you will notice that nothing is said about the growth of the church. There were many praises and many censures, but not one of them was about growing or failing to grow.

Do I want to see the church grow? Most definitely. When souls are being saved the church is growing in numbers. However, it is possible that leaders could be interested in growing in size for the wrong reasons. It could be pride. We do not like to be outdone by others. We do not like to feel that we have failed. We like success.

Churches are not the only things that rise and fall. Schools do this. Cities do this. Areas of a city have this experience. "Downtown" at one time indicated thriving activity, successful businesses. In most cities today, "downtown" may well mean blight and flight. What happened? Businesses that once served real purposes yielded to competitors who built businesses in more convenient locations with better parking. They may have lower overhead and offer more competitive prices. They create a greater volume of business and cut prices.

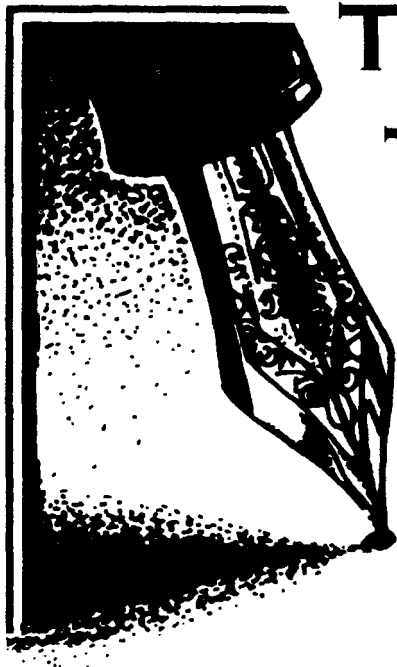
Some cities feel it their task to make downtown what it once was. If it serves a useful purpose, it will rebuild itself because there will be a demand for its services. Areas that die generally deserve to die. By the same token, congregations that die usually deserve to die.

If we fail to solve our problems in a Biblical way, those problems may sink our ship. If we fail to faithfully present the Word, we deserve to die. If we lack love and compassion, we deserve to die. If we fail to aggressively work, we fail to serve a useful purpose and deserve to die. Artificial efforts to revive such a church will not work.

Let's have a reason to live and grow.

†

Lewis G. Hale has preached many years for the Southwest congregation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, U.S.A.



TRAINING TO TEACH

*Why Do You
Not Use
Instrumental
Music
In Worship?*

Jane McWhorter

We Christian women are frequently asked why we practice certain things in our worship to God. I would suggest that you mark your Bibles in a miniature chain reference of basic subjects. On a blank page at either the front or the back of your Bible, write the word MUSIC. Beside that word list the first reference given below. In the margin by the first reference, list the second one, and so on to the end. These nine verses are the only references to music in the New Testament. Let your friend read each one with you:

Matthew 26:30

Acts 16:25

Romans 15:9

1 Corinthians 14:15

Ephesians 5:19

Colossians 3:16

Hebrews 2:12

Hebrews 13:15

James 5:13

TRAINING TO TEACH

In every instance, the reference is to singing ONLY.

Usually someone quickly asks about harps in heaven. At the front of your Bible, under the heading of MUSIC with Matthew 26:30 listed beside it, write the reference Revelation 14:2.

Music — Matthew 26:30

Revelation 14:2

If your friend mentions harps being used in heaven, turn to the passage (Revelation 14:2) and read the verse together. Explain that the book of Revelation is filled with figurative language. This verse cannot be read out of context with the other verses. Scan the preceding chapter, in addition to the remainder of chapter 14, as well as chapter 15. There you will find the mention of a beast with seven heads and ten horns, a sharp sickle, blood from winepresses, a sea of glass mingled with fire, and vials full of the wrath of God. This passage can in no way be interpreted as a pattern for worship in the church as it exists in this world.

Another frequently used objection concerns the references to instrumental music in the Old Testament (Psalm 33:3; 43:4; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3-5). Point out that God did not ORDAIN the use of instrumental music when He set up the pattern of worship for the tabernacle, or the temple in later years. It was never used in the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place, but only in the court, as time went by. The key may be found in 1 Chronicles 23:5 and in 1 Chronicles 29:27: "...four thousand praised the Lord with the *instruments which I (David) made...with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel.*" King David also had a plurality of wives (2 Samuel 3:2-5 and 2 Samuel 5:13-16). This was not according to God's plan from the beginning (Matthew 19:8), but was simply tolerated. Even if instrumental music had been sanctioned under the Old Law, we are no longer under that law (Colossians 2:14, Romans 7:4).

In the front of your Bible you should have written:

Music — Matthew 26:30

Revelation 14:2

1 Chronicles 23:5

If someone brings up the subject of instrumental music in Old Testament worship, turn to 1 Chronicles 23:5. Beside that verse, in the margin, write 1 Chronicles 29:27; beside that passage write 2 Samuel 3:2-5; beside that one write 2 Samuel 5:13-16. In the margin beside that last verse, write Matthew 19:8. Follow this last passage by Colossians 2:14 and Romans 7:4.

You should tell your questioning friend that historians of early church history verify the fact that the early Christians worshipped without instrumental music until the years around 600-700 A.D., when the first organ was introduced. Even then, the instrument was not generally accepted until around 1200 A.D. Many of the reformation leaders opposed instrumental music — Calvin, Wesley, and Luther.

If a person sincerely wishes to follow the New Testament pattern for music, there can be no justification for the use of instrumental music in worship. †

Jane McWhorter is a writer and the wife of a gospel preacher, and they live in Fayette, Alabama, U.S.A.

A Gentle Word
One gentle word
that we may speak,
Or one kind,
loving deed,
May, though a trifle,
poor and weak,
Prove like a tiny seed,
And who can tell what
good may spring
From such a very little
thing?

— Author Unknown

Man's Ultimate Priority

Perhaps the greatest need among all believers is for a clear understanding of the biblical teaching about worship. When man fails to worship properly, he fails in all other areas.

Worship is to the Christian life what the mainspring is to a watch or what the engine is to a car. Worship is the very core of life in Christ.

Clearly the ultimate priority of the Christian life is expressed by the Psalmist David in Psalm 29:2. There he says, "Worship the Lord in the majesty of holiness."

There is something so unique, so holy about worship that it is utterly apart from anything else in the human dimension. No man can take from God that which He has designed for Himself (Isaiah 48:11). Deviant worship is not acceptable to God. Examples of this type of worship are condemned in Scripture.

— Claude Flynn

Yes, Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). This is a wonderful thought and assurance. Jesus is not with everyone. "Who-soever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

Those who are in Christ have all spiritual blessings available to them (Ephesians 1:3). One of these blessings is salvation, and this salvation is in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10). One enters Christ by believing and being baptized (Galatians 3:26,27). Then we are to walk in Him (Colossians 2:6). And, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus keeps us clean (1 John 1:7). These things are essential if we would have the assurance of Jesus being with us.



**There
Am
I
In
The
Midst**

J. A. Thornton

Suggests An Assembly

The expression "where two or three are gathered" most certainly suggests an assembly. One may worship alone and should so do, but this in no way removes the need for worship in the assembly; nor does assembled worship minimize the need for personal devotion.

It may also be pointed out that in the worshipping assembly, worship is acceptable to God on an individual basis. For example, all should be participating, even in unison, but God judges *individually*.

The writer of the Hebrews epistle said, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," and this is a part of holding fast the profession of our faith (Hebrews 10:23-25). In a time of heavy persecution, slavery, and difficulty of assembly that we cannot imagine, Christians were told not to forsake the assembly. How much more should we be faithful to assemble in our time of great convenience and ease!

In The Name Of Jesus

Jesus said, "*Where two or three are gathered in my name....*" There are a number of things we are told to do in His name: be baptized, pray, sing, and give thanks.

"*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...*" (Colossians 3:17). What does it mean to do a thing in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38)? Thayer's Greek Lexicon says it means to act by His authority. This is like the law officer saying, "Stop in the name of the law." That is, "I, as a spokesman for the recognized law, have the authority to stop you."

Therefore, when Jesus said, "*Where two or three are gathered in my name,*" He was simply saying, "Where two or three are gathered by *My authority.*" Recognizing the meaning of "in Jesus' name" will help us to understand some other passages. In Mark 9:38 John said, "*Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followed not us and we forbade him...*" Jesus told them not to forbid him, then He observed, "*He that is not against us is for us.*" This principle applies only to those who do things *by the authority* of Christ and not to religious people who act *without* His authority.

**There Will I Be
In The Midst Of Them**

This is a wonderful assurance.

Does it not thrill us to know that when we assemble to worship, Jesus is right there with us? He is not physically present, but spiritually He is there. He is not in every public gathering, but He is in the meeting that takes place in His name.

I am afraid that we are not conscious enough of His presence. He is the unseen guest. To help us visualize this better, just suppose that when you entered the meeting place Jesus visibly came and sat beside you. How would you feel? When the song service began, would you sing if He were there? Would you daydream during the prayer? What about the preaching? Could you relax enough to doze off? Would you be thinking about lunch during the Lord's Supper if He were there? When it came time to give, if Jesus actually sat by you, would you give more? When the service ended and Jesus walked out of the service with you, would you rush out and ignore your brothers and sisters?

Honestly, what would you do?

You cannot see Him, but He sees you. He is right there beside you, for "*Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them*" (Matthew 18:20). †

J. A. Thornton is a long-time gospel preacher in Mississippi, now living in Booneville, Mississippi, U.S.A.



God Is on the Throne, Not on Stage

Dalton Key

The God we serve is an awesome, spiritual being both deserving and desirous of our deepest respect. Though described in Scripture as a friend to man (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23), He is not some sort of “good buddy” to joke with or about. Our God is still on the throne (Psalm 45:6), His ways remain higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:9), and His authoritative Word still promises to judge us in the Last Day (Revelation 20:12).

No measure of self-appointed, flip-pant familiarity with the God of heaven detracts one bit or whit from His inherent majesty. Our God is eminently worthy of our reverence, thus we must serve Him “*acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (Hebrews 12:28). Truly, reverence is the “very first element of religion”

WORSHIP

(Charles Simmons).

Moreover, our periods of public worship should express this spirit of reverence. *"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be held in reverence of all (them that are) about Him"* (Psalm 89:7). Worship performed "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) suggests a demeanor of awe and reverence.

We agree that our worship services should be permeated with expressions of joy and thanksgiving — they should not come to resemble a congregational visit to the dentist; but neither should the reverent worship of our heavenly Father be confused with a carnival or a rock concert. Whether our worship is that offered during a Sunday morning service, involving a lectureship assembly, or that which is engaged in by a zealous throng of young people attending a youth rally — regardless of where, when or by whom the worship is performed — **it must be characterized by reverence and decorum.** *"Let all things be done decently and in order"* (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The worship assembly is not the proper setting for screaming, whistling, clapping, and stomping

the feet in response to a speaker's message. We do not meet in order to pay homage to men, but to worship God. We do not come together as to a football game or a stage-band concert; we must come to worship God. We do not assemble with the intent of being entertained or

sensually excited; we come to worship God. Any assembly of saints with the intent of wor-

shipping and praising the God of heaven should reject that which emphasizes the carnal emotions and minimizes the spiritual man.

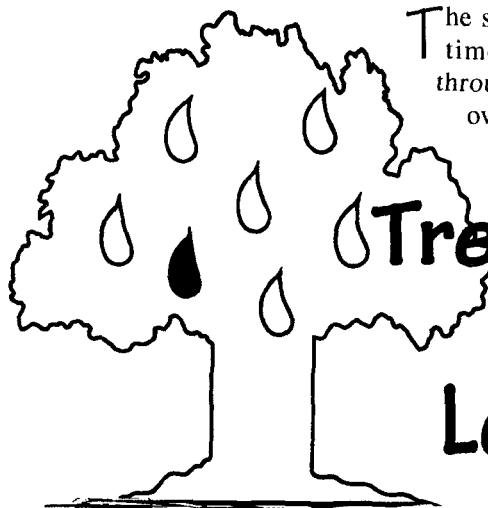
In the realm of worship, *"zeal without knowledge"* paves a dangerous road toward pagan, flesh-oriented, and riotous assemblies. Some of our denominational neighbors have long gone this route, with services geared more toward entertaining man than worshipping God. May we learn to temper our joy in Christ with a Christ-like reverence for things holy. And may we teach our children so.

Remember, our God is on the throne — not on stage. †

Dalton Key is the editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the North Amarillo congregation in Amarillo, Texas, USA.

Worship services should not come to resemble a congregational visit to the dentist; but neither should the reverent worship of our heavenly Father be confused with a carnival or a rock concert.

The story is told that once upon a time, a little boy was looking through the fence of an orchard owned by a very successful fruit grower. He was looking with



Treatment of the Lord's Day

Raymond Kelcy

longing eyes at some delicious pears on a nearby tree.

The man who owned the orchard saw the little boy and his heart went out in love and compassion. He picked six beautiful pears and gave them to the lad. The boy did not thank the man for the generous gift, and later came back when the man was absent and stole the seventh pear which was still on the tree.

One would be inclined to think of this as a mean and selfish act. He didn't thank the man for his generosity! Then he stole the one remaining pear after the man had been so good in giving him the other six!

However, this wasn't half as bad as what is done by hundreds of men and women who use six days each week in a very selfish way, not ever taking time out to thank God for His goodness. Then when the Lord's Day comes, they take that for themselves too.

"It's the only day I have," some have been heard to say. "I was so tired that I felt I needed the rest," is another rather common excuse.

But the Lord's Day is **the Lord's**. It is not **ours**. It isn't the only day we have. How can *thinking* people be so thankless as to live so selfishly? How can people sleep, read the paper, listen to the radio, watch TV, or play golf when the time comes for God's people to assemble at His feet for Bible study and worship?

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..." (Hebrews 10:25). †

Raymond Kelcy, gospel preacher in the state of Oklahoma, now deceased.

It's Easy to Share Truth

Dan Wheeler

If we are serious about being a New Testament Christian, will we not want to share it with others? If you have been avoiding this part of the Christian life, it's time to do something about it. If the secular world tries to encourage communication about secular subjects (both Larry King and Barbara Walters have written how-to books about talking), we should be determined to overcome our shyness and get into conversations with others about spiritual matters for the sake of their (and our) souls. Opportunities abound in everyday life, such as talking with friends, strangers, and relatives.

It is easier to talk to friends about religion when it is realized that **true friends are concerned with what is important to the other**. I can thus approach a friend by saying, "We've been friends for a while; can we talk about something that is extremely important?"


Talking to relatives is probably the hardest of all. We are often too reserved or defensive when the family has a history of not talking openly, on any subject. Breaking the barrier is difficult, but it can be done by being naturally enthusiastic about a

wonderful subject. Andrew did it by getting his brother Simon and bringing him to Christ (John 1:41).

Personally, I think talking to strangers is easiest — we are a little braver with those that we may never see again. Clerks and cashiers are prime targets to quickly plant a seed, since their job requires them to be civil. If you are considerate of their situation by being brief and leaving them a friendly invitation to come and worship with you, you'll generally find a favorable reception to your efforts. Leave a church business card with Scriptures on it for the person to study.

The principle of "practice makes perfect" applies to this area: the more you speak up, the easier it will become, and the better you will get at saying the appropriate thing. If all Christians would spend their lives talking about the Good News, the Gospel would spread like it did during the first century, when it was preached "*unto every creature under heaven*" (Colossians 1:23). With the help of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:20), it's that easy. †

Dan Wheeler preaches for the South Seminole congregation in Winter Park, Florida, U.S.A.



Iron Curtains in Our World

Bobby Dockery

The phrase "iron curtain" was coined by Winston Churchill in a 1946 speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, to describe the impenetrable barriers to travel, communication, and freedom imposed by the Soviet regime. The world cheered in 1989 as the Berlin Wall fell and the old iron curtain began to disintegrate. Yet, there are still many iron curtains in our world — barriers which keep the Gospel of Christ from reaching lost men and women.



The Iron Curtain of Ignorance

World population approaches 6 billion. It grows by 175,000 every day! More than 50 countries have never been evangelized! There are 3 million cities, towns, and villages

without a single Christian. Less than half the world's people have even heard of Jesus! Only one in 5 has a Bible. In 1975, 30% of the world was "Christian"; by 2000 only 15% will be! More and more people are born every year to live and die without even hearing of Christ!



The Iron Curtain of Prejudice

Religion can sometimes be a barrier which keeps men and women from Christ! Because men preach doctrines of their own invention rather than the Word of Christ, millions never really get to know Him. Jesus described some who "*honored Him with their lips,*" but whose hearts were "*far from Him.*" The reason — they taught "*for doc-*

trines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Many honest seekers for Christ have only a distorted picture of Him, because they see Him through the barrier of denominational prejudice.

The Iron Curtain of Silence

Jesus sent His followers into all the world to declare the message of salvation to all men (Matthew 28:19,20), and He said that those converts should teach other converts to teach other converts, so that all men would hear the gospel. The truth is, we haven't done a very good job of obeying Him. Christ has remained hidden to much of the world. We have often been guilty of keeping Him imprisoned inside our houses of worship. We display Him proudly there, but we don't take Him out into the world — because we have loved the comforts of home, or because we have found it too expensive or demanding, or because we are too embarrassed. And behind an iron curtain of our own making, lost souls wait to hear the message of freedom.

May God help us to tear down the walls! †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U.S.A.

Give Yourself a Spiritual Test

- Does my life glorify God and cause others to glorify Him? (Matthew 5:13-16).
- Am I happy to be a servant of God? (Philippians 3:1; 4:4).
- Do I love people, even to the point of loving my enemies? (Matthew 5:44).
- Am I a daily Bible reader, serious about learning God's will? (Acts 17:11).
- Does my prayer life reflect faith and trust in God? (Matthew 6:5-15).
- Have I ever won even one soul for Jesus? (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Am I teaching anyone the gospel and praying for their salvation? (Titus 2:11-15).
- Do I focus my life on temporary things or eternal things? (Matthew 6:19-21).
- Will I sacrifice myself and what I have for Jesus? (2 Corinthians 12:15).
- Am I willing to repent of sins and to correct attitudes and actions which are un-Christ-like? (Acts 17:30,31).
- Is the world better or worse because I live? (Galatians 5:19-23).
- Am I using myself in God's work? (1 Corinthians 15:58).

— Charles Box

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Christians sometimes try to excuse their lack of involvement in personal evangelism by saying they are unable to get prospects with whom to study. **Perhaps they are looking in the wrong places, if indeed they are looking at all.**

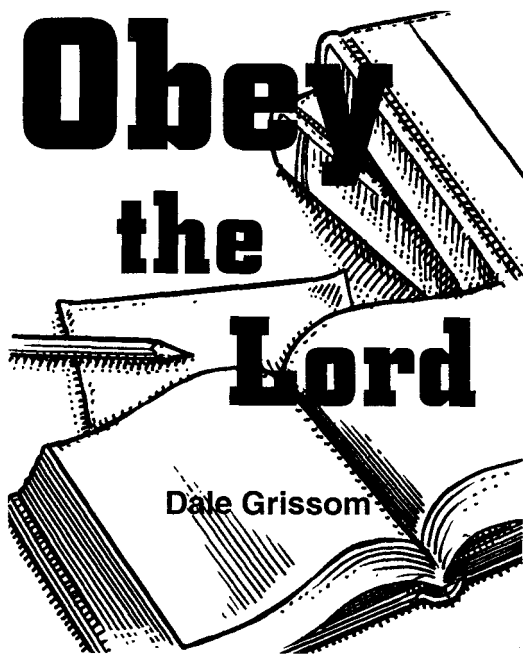
There are many who will be willing to study if they are approached in the right way and at the right time. Friends, fellow workers, and those who are hurting physically or emotionally make good prospects for Bible studies. A member of a family in which there are other Christians makes a good prospect. Those who visit church services may very well be searching for the Lord and would welcome an invitation to study. There are some who have visited the church for years and have never obeyed the Gospel, perhaps because no one has taken the time to study with them and encourage them.

Winning lost souls may be the hardest work you ever do, but it will be the most rewarding. Just think of it: **You can help someone to be obedient to the Gospel of Christ!** *You can help someone prepare to live with Christ forever in heaven!* There is not a more important work than this!

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

We must realize that we are the earthen vessels to whom God has committed the Gospel, and that we have the responsibility of teaching it to the world (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). If we are to be pleasing to the Lord, we must busy ourselves with His work.†

Dale Grissom works with the church in Dexter, Missouri, U.S.A.



A Scientist Attends Prayer Meeting

Hershel Dyer

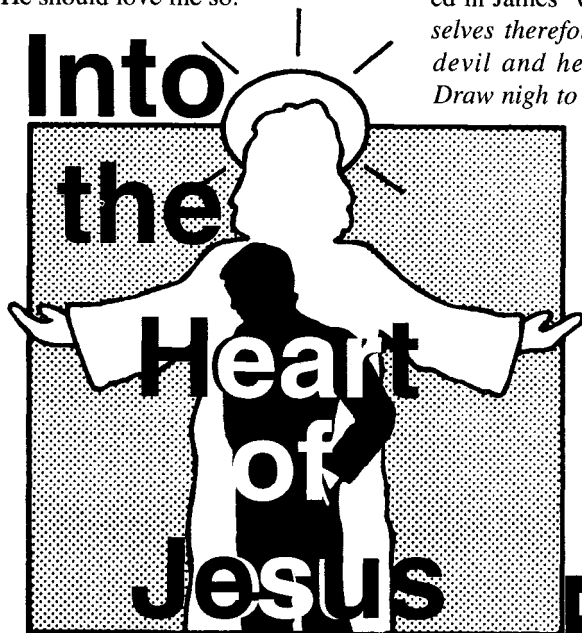
A large gathering had been listening spellbound to the masterly expositions of Sir Michael Faraday, one of the most noted physicists of the 19th century. The audience of scholars had been literally enthralled by some of his demonstrations. He brought his lecture to a close with a brilliant experiment that left his peers applauding for some time after he had stopped speaking. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, rose to propose a motion of congratulations, which was carried with renewed applause. Soon the uproar ceased and a strange silence came over the crowd. Everyone waited for Faraday to rise and acknowledge the royal honor just pronounced. However, he had quietly slipped out of the great chamber. The time at which he closed his lecture was the hour for the midweek prayer meeting in a small congregation where he was an elder. Not for any applause or royal honor was he willing to miss that weekly midweek service.

Missing an assembly of the church, on the Lord's day, and especially on a weekday, does not seem important to many. In fact, some need little in the way of an excuse to do so, and many do so deliberately and with indifference.

It is not so much the missing of the assembly that is serious, for a great number miss because they are unable to come. It is the lack of a spiritual heart which has no compelling desire to be among one's fellow-Christians and be involved in a gathering where souls are uplifted and drawn to God. The blessing which Christ promised to *"those who hunger and thirst after righteousness"* can hardly belong to those who willingly neglect the assemblies of God's people (Hebrews 10:24,25). †

Hershel Dyer has served for many years as the preacher for the 10th & Rockford church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

So many of the devotional songs written over the past century express the beautiful thought that good things are to be found "Near to the Heart of God." So it is "Into the heart of Jesus, deeper and deeper I go, seeking to know the reason why He should love me so."



for thinking and behavior. Before a person can draw near to God's heart or enter the heart of Jesus, there must be a "meeting of the minds." Before one can enter the home of another, there must be an approach and a response. This truth is depicted in James' writing, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.*"

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:7,8).

There is no possibility of being close to God in mind if our affections have been set "*on things of the earth*" and not "*on things which are above, where*

Michael L. King

We often express the same sentiment when we say, "Those children sure know how to get close to their mother's heart." What does it mean to enter the heart of Jesus or be near to the heart of God?

The heart (mind) of man is the seat of reasoning and affection. The heart of man is the "control center"

Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1-3). If we desire to be near to God's heart, a realignment may be required in order for our desires and values to be compatible with His. This undoubtedly is why Isaiah made the declaration, "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your*

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that ye will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Enmity was placed between God and man when a third party, Satan, was allowed admission into the hearts of men (Genesis 3:15). This same enmity manifests itself today through a carnal mind (Romans 8:7).

Numerous passages appear in Holy Writ expressing God's abhorrence for sin, which results in man being "cast out," where "God gave them up," or they were told to "Depart from me ye that work iniquity," etc. Godliness and ungodliness are separates. Righteousness and unrighteousness can never be expected to blend. The Corinthians found themselves being pulled and drawn in their affections, and Paul gave the injunction to "come ye out from among them and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Being near to the heart of God must demand an estrangement from the devil and his evils. The presence of a right relationship with God presupposes the absence of affection for the world, sin, and the

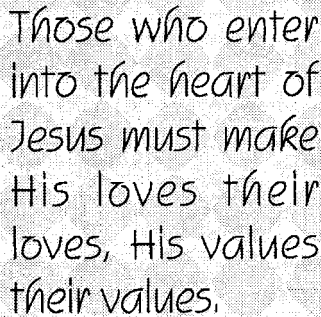
devil. Our Lord taught that a "man can not serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Those who enter into the heart of Jesus must make His loves their loves, His values their values.

God's entire scheme of salvation was for reconciliation purposes. Man became alienated and separated by sin, with damage beyond his means to mend. While man was yet struggling in failure and futility, "Christ died for us," redeeming us from the wrath and destruction that should have been ours (Romans 5:6-11).

The challenge of every man is to "let this mind (heart) be in you which was also in

Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Jesus described the procedure when He taught, "If ye love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

If we want to access the heart of Jesus and be near to the heart of God, it is obtainable through the avenue of obedience. The more loyal one's obedience, the closer he gets to the very heart of God. The heart of Christ is made tender and warm toward those who obey Him



Those who enter into the heart of Jesus must make His loves their loves, His values their values.

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to the extent of being their Savior (Hebrews 5:9).

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1,2). Jesus authored a better testament (covenant) by which a better hope was wrought and *"by the which we draw nigh unto God"* (Hebrews 7:19-22). The entire burden of proof was not left to rest on the shoulders of sinful man. Jesus said, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."* The process by which He would accomplish this would be the *"death he should die"* (John 12:32-33).

Jesus expressed a strong desire for man to be drawn to Him, and thus voiced His invitation, *"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). He grieved over Jerusalem and would have often treated them like a mother hen

drawing her chicks beneath her wings, but He sadly reported, *"...ye would not"* (Matthew 23:37).

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:20). This wonderful experience comes by our becoming God's *"holy nation, a peculiar people for God's own possession; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* so that we can be *"the people of God"* (1 Peter 2:9,10)!

Our prayer should be, *"Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side!"* †

Michael L. King preaches for the Grant Street congregation in Decatur, Alabama, U.S.A.



Today I made a commitment to reach out to someone in my community. Today I prayed that God will help me to find someone who wants to study His word. Today I called and made an appointment to visit a friend who is a possibility. Today I am praying for her and for me. Tomorrow I will go to visit her

ADVERSITY and GROWTH

Rex Banks

“It is not true that suffering ennobles the character; happiness does that sometimes, but suffering, for the most part, makes men petty and vindictive” — William Somerset Maugham.

True, we don't have to walk far down life's thorny pathway to meet individuals who have been embittered by pain and soured by adversity. The failed businessman who becomes a petty tyrant at home, the disadvantaged child who develops into a cynical adult and the frustrated artist, carrying around his disappointment like a security blanket — all bear testimony to the negative effects of hardship and suffering. A succession of defeats can crush the soul's most noble aspirations, while a deeply felt loss can extinguish the light of hope within the human heart.

Devastated by the death of his beloved daughter, Mark Twain wrote, “A myriad of men are born;

they scramble for little, mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them and infirmities follow; shame and humiliation bring down their **pride and vanities**...At length ambition is dead; longing for release is in its place. It comes at last — the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, where they left no sign that they have existed — a world that will lament them for a day and then forget them forever.”

That's sad! Poor grief-stricken hopeless men.

Now as one who has never really known deep, soul-crushing sorrow I need to be careful about pious platitudes and empty cliches when confronted with the pain of others. I've just never been there myself but what I do know, from revelation rather than from experience, is that pain can ennoble, hardship can

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improve, suffering can enrich — provided it is accompanied by a deep, abiding faith in Jehovah's goodness and power!

Read the book of Job (esp. 40:3-5; 42) and tell me that the patriarch was not a deeper, wiser, richer character at the end of his trials.

Read the book of 1st and 2nd Peter, taking note of such words as "*patience*", "*hope*" and "*suffering*" and tell me that this aged apostle who has learned to entrust his soul to "a faithful Creator" in the midst of suffering (I Pet. 4:19) is not more noble, gracious, courageous and attractive than the youthful Peter of the gospel accounts.

Paul's deprivation and hardship (I Corinthians 4:9ff, II Corinthians 11:18ff) didn't produce a bitter, cynical, suspicious old man, but a man possessed of a lovely, sturdy, unshakable faith. (*I know whom I have believed*" and "*...in the future there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,*" 2 Tim. 1:12;4:8 — this in a Roman prison, awaiting death!)

You see, the difference between a Somerset Maugham and a Peter is the knowledge that God indeed "*causes all things to work together for good to them who love God*" (Romans 8:28). Yes, even the most difficult of times and deepest of

losses. The difference between a poor, sad Mark Twain and the victorious apostle Paul was simple belief in His word.

Brethren, when the gray, chilling clouds of adversity threaten to draw a veil over the sunlight, keep this in mind — that same sun which hardens clay also softens butter, and the same trials which can embitter the unbeliever can enrich the life of the believer.

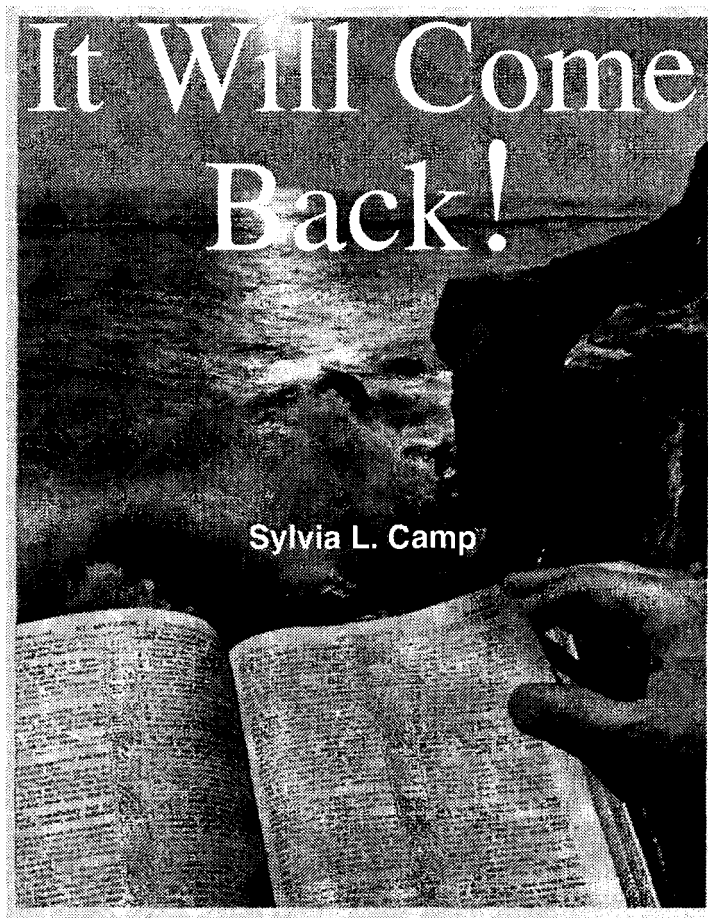
Our job is not to understand the purpose behind every trial — our job is to believe that God is in control! Our task is not to fathom the depth of each and every disappointment or to neatly explain life's tragedies — our task is to cling to God's promises so that we too may be able to sing songs at midnight.

We began with the words of an uninspired man; let's finish with a word from the Holy Spirit: "*...but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint*" (Romans 5:3-5).

It's an easy verse to quote — the real trick is living as if we believe it. †

Rex Banks works with the Lord's church in Hamilton, New Zealand.

When we have nothing left but God, we find that God is enough.



(Managing Editor's note — This is the last in a series of four articles in which the author has shared her thoughts and experiences associated with her encounter with cancer. Surely her words have brought to many readers some smiles, as well as some tears, as we identify as best we can with her. Hopefully others will be better able to cope successfully as they are called upon to face similar circumstances.)

It took time for me to face the fact that there was an undeniable prospect of my death by cancer. I couldn't say, "But I'm too young to die."

I've been on borrowed time for several years. Obituary columns show that many much younger than I are listed there.

I don't want to leave my family. We deeply love and respect each other. Our three children are Christians and so are their companions. It's also true of their children. I firmly believe that this faith will continue into the next generations. What more could I ask? So, could I leave them? Yes. That's life. We'll be reunited in heaven.

I don't want to leave my husband. We've had so many wonderful, happy years together. We need each other. He's said for years he hopes to go first. He thinks I'll be able to manage being alone better than he. I'm not sure of that. I know there'll be no marriage in heaven. It's hard to understand, to accept anything that keeps me from being his wife.

It seems impossible to think anything could be better than what I've had here. But in the dark of night when I couldn't sleep, these words from 1 Corinthians 2:9, which Paul quoted from Isaiah, began to open up new thoughts and desires within me. *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*

Some of these wonders are

revealed by John in the book of Revelation. Those who've kept the commandments will see the faces of God and Christ as they serve them. I began to realize there's more to those promises than mere words. God has given His will for us in His instruction book, the Bible. Are we faithfully following it in our lives? Am I?

Had I been asked before cancer if I had a strong faith, likely I would have answered that I thought so. Our lives have been busy but predictable. We've been relatively free from crises. But we had not been tested!

I reacted more intensely as the chemotherapy progressed. Now I could see that testing had begun. I had to face the fact that this was real. I could die. But I knew that more than anything, I wanted to go to heaven.

Our Heavenly Father is never unmindful of His children. He gave us a direct line to Him — prayer. I've used it all my life, but nothing like I have since hearing the words, "It will come back."

As I prayed, I began to remember wishes I've nurtured since childhood. I wanted to see the Bible women who inspired me and those of my sweet family who've gone on.

During my hospital stays, I slept little. I wasn't allowed company. Even family visits were limited. I spent that time talking to my Father. After chemo began, my

reactions made sleep impossible again. Over and over I prayed. I had time to open my heart and thank God for my blessings, my opportunities to serve Him, to glorify Him. I told Him I couldn't really know His deep love for mankind which He showed by sending His Son to die that we might live. It's hard to understand how one could love as Jesus did, being willing to make that sacrifice. But even if I did not understand, I wanted them to know I loved them.

One part of my prayers I repeated constantly. "Dear Father, if it's Your will, I want a few more years if I can be productive. You know best, I don't — You know the future, I don't."

As I lost myself in prayer, a feeling of peace filled me. The report on a battery of tests made after I fin-

ished chemo showed "Clear."

It took a little time for me to realize that God had answered my prayers as I asked. But since I'd always asked if it were His will, I felt He'd open more doors of service for me. In addition to writing Bible study books for women, I've added writing lyrics for spiritual hymns, a lovely way to praise and honor Him.

During my illness, when asked how I felt, I'd say, "I'm fine." I really am! My Father is taking care of me. When He decides to call me home, I'll be ready. I have no dread if I should hear, "It has come back." My "heaven on earth" enhances my joy for my eternal home with my Father and His Son. †

Sylvia L. Camp is a Christian writer who lives in Amarillo, Texas, U.S.A.

As long as death remains a question, we cling to the loved ones of this life, to their needs, to the unfinished work to be done; and the longing to live remains paramount in the thinking. But, suddenly, as if I were really crossing over that line — where there is no longer a question of "Will I live?" or "Will I die?" but where death has become a settled and inescapable fact — I found myself looking forward within the freedom of that knowledge.

And I felt my heart swell with the excitement of the thought, "*I'm going home!* This morning — in an hour or so — I will have crossed that invisible wall and I will open my eyes in the *real* world! All my life my face has been turned in that direction. I've been working, waiting, expecting to get there. In this little measurement of time left to me — *maybe just an hour* — I'll know eternity and the glory and joy of that world!" — BBC



A Better Day

Don W. Walker

The prophet Isaiah, whose name means "Jehovah is salvation," wrote of a wicked and rebellious people. He declared that a once-proud Zion would become nothing

more than a lean-to shack in the field (Isaiah 1:7,8). The faithful city had become an harlot! There had been a time when righteousness lodged there, but now only murder-

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ers (Isaiah 1:21). So certain was the destruction that would come upon this rebellious people, that Jehovah recorded, "*For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory*" (Isaiah 3:8). Isaiah's prophecies on many occasions were dark clouds of gloom hovering over an ungodly people.

However, not all of Isaiah's prophecies spoke of destruction. In fact, on many occasions God's Holy Spirit moved Isaiah to speak of hope and restoration.

In chapter four, we read of *a better day* on the horizon. God promised that the time would come when *the branch of the Lord* would be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth would be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel (Isaiah 4:2). "*And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem*" (Isaiah 4:3). There would also be "*a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain*" (Isaiah 4:6).

Truly, one of the great things concerning the Bible is how it will shine a ray of hope in the darkest of

times. In Genesis 3, when we see the transgression of man, we read the curse that was put upon each of the participants, and even on the earth. Yet, in the middle of all of that, Jehovah says, "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:15). In what seems to be the darkest hour for man, when he had separated himself from the presence of God, Jehovah gave that ray of hope.

It is easy to become discouraged as we try to remain righteous and faithful in such a wicked world. There will be times when we stumble, but God continues to send that ray of hope in that He is constantly willing to cleanse and forgive us our sins (1 John 1:7-9). No matter how dark the time may seem, Jehovah has extended a shining light and a ray of hope in His Son Jesus Christ.

May we all so walk as to show that we recognize what God has done on our behalf. May we all so live as to show our gratitude for such a benevolent God. And may we each express our thanksgiving to Jehovah continually as we study our Bibles much, much more, allowing God to teach us through His word. †

Don W. Walker preaches for the Shenandoah congregation in San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.

The Long Home of the Soul

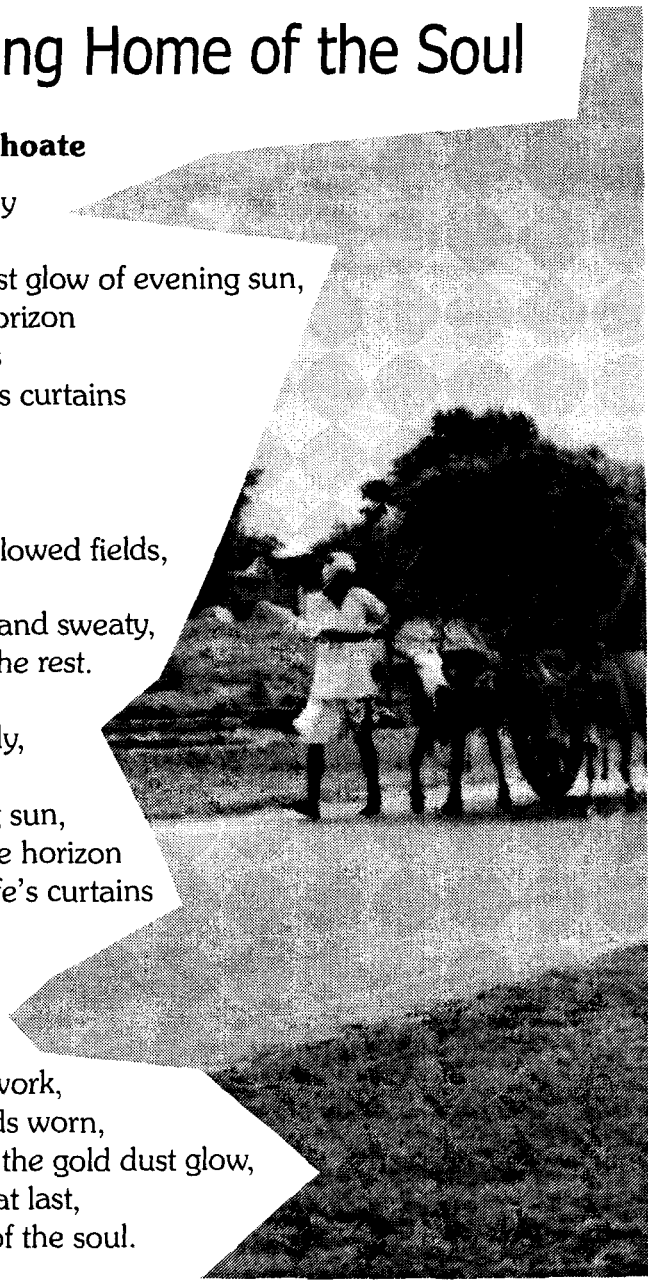
Betty Burton Choate

Slowly, ceaselessly
The train rolls on
Through gold dust glow of evening sun,
Cool, now, the horizon
As twilight comes
And draws night's curtains
To a close.

Men plod home
Across the new-plowed fields,
Their bullocks
Caked with dust and sweaty,
Tired, ready for the rest.

Slowly, ceaselessly,
Life rolls on
Through evening sun,
Cool, now, on the horizon
As night draws life's curtains
To a close.

We plod home
Across the fields,
Weary with our work,
Backs bent, minds worn,
Ready for rest in the gold dust glow,
Ready to reach, at last,
The long home of the soul.





The Harm of Our Divorce Culture

Max Patterson

Probably the biggest cover-up in our generation has to do with the impact that divorce has on children. For years I have believed that it has a devastating effect on children (even grown children). I have been surprised recently by the television news magazine stories showing this devastating effect. This happened, in part, because of studies done by psychologist and divorce research expert Judith Wallerstein and Julia Lewis, a psychology professor.

People had been led to believe that “our happiness” was all that mattered. After all, children have a wonderful way of “adjusting,” and they will be all right. However, it is impossible to describe the profound unhappiness inflicted upon countless children by those who took this view. Wallerstein and Lewis, whose report was the result of a 25-year study, showed that far beyond the devastating initial effect on children, the stark emotional scars and attitudes formed as a result of divorce shape behavior and relationships well into adulthood.

It's a lie that divorce is normal and children will adjust!

One half of those studied

became seriously involved with drugs, including the drug alcohol. Many children, especially girls, became sexually active very early. Most fathers (these were middle and upper class families) did not fully support their children's education. The children were very anxious about their own marriage as they grew up, and very anxious about marriage fidelity. Their sense of loneliness, of no one to take care of them, was overwhelming, and this feeling remained 25 years later.

Divorce normal? Hardly! This study definitely shows that the portrayal of the media that divorce is normal and that children will adjust was a big lie.

The family is what holds any society together. God knew that when He gave the law of one man for one woman for life. The family is a divine institution of God. It has been sad to observe what men have done to the family, and what havoc has been wreaked upon marriage. Such is simply another consequence of not honoring and respecting the laws of God. †

Max Patterson is the preacher for the Hillcrest congregation in Neosho, Missouri, U.S.A.



Wisdom

Johnny Ramsey

Parents must ever be reminded of the principle of sowing and reaping. This does not mean that every person who chooses of his own will to go astray from the truth is a product of ungodly parents. Just as children brought up in evil homes can later choose to be righteous (Joshua 24:15), so can offspring of spiritual homes decide later to leave the Lord (Romans 11:22). After all, Romans 14:12 tells us that *"each one shall give account of himself to God."*

However, parents who fail to both teach and live the genuineness of Christianity before their children will one day answer for such tragic blunders. We build today the house

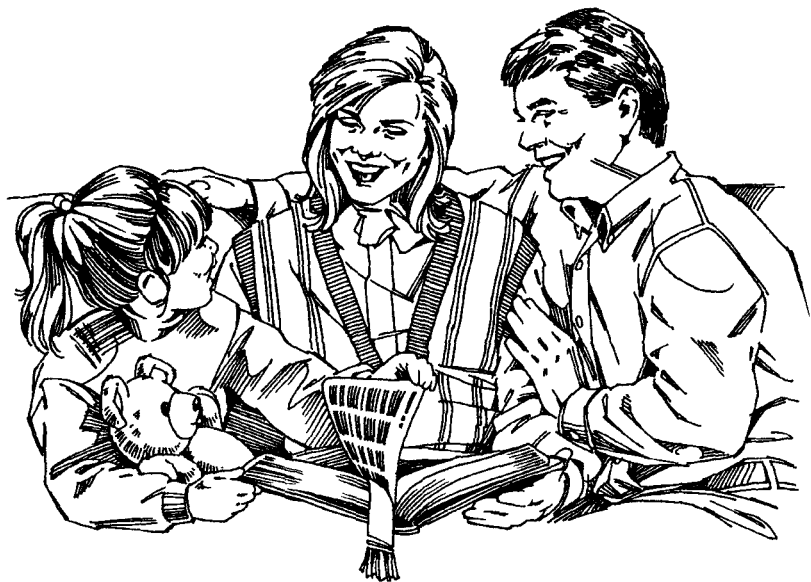
we and our children will live in tomorrow. As the psalmist said, *"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it"* (Psalm 127:1).

Young people who choose worldly associates will reap the whirlwind of such poor decisions (1 Corinthians 15:33). Rather, wisely, should all youth heed the admonition, *"Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth"* (Ecclesiastes 12:1). To be an example of purity (1 Timothy 4:12) will make their sojourn upon this earth one to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). Such wisdom will evince itself in a life of peace and joy that no earthly wealth could provide (Philippians 4:7,11,13,19).

There is never any peace for the wicked (Isaiah 57:12), and all temporal wealth will someday be dissolved (2 Peter 3:11). Let us, therefore, cease to sow the seed of mundane pleasure, lest we reap the dividends of our shameful emphasis. No verse says it better than this, *"What reward have you in those things you are now ashamed of?"* (Romans 6:21).

Let us ever be alert to the fact that we do reap what we sow. May we ever be dedicated and disciplined as we march toward eternity. †

Johnny Ramsey is an evangelist and teaches in the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Bedford, Texas, U.S.A.



Honorable Parents

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

It is true that God has commanded children to “honor” their parents. But, no one can teach your children to honor you! That’s the parents’ responsibility! There are no perfect parents, but parents can be honorable! The ideal situation is honorable parents and honoring children.

How can parents gain their children’s honor? Let me suggest five ways:

◆ **First, love them.** Love gives what they need, not what they want. Give them your affection. Children need hugs! The tender touch of loving parents gives confidence and a sense of security. Love them by believing in them, dreaming, hoping, and praising them. Love them by listening and by praying for them.

◆ **Second, lift them.** Build them up! “*Fathers, provoke not*

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). Just as a plant needs, and must have, water, children need encouragement.

◆ **Third, limit them.** It takes *firm restrictions to set children free*. So, you liberate them by limiting them. Eli failed to do this and paid dearly for his neglect (1 Samuel 3:13). Children will push to see if their parents will move. Every child needs discipline to have a sense of security. But, always keep in mind that limits must be drawn with love. Sadly, our society is being deceived into thinking that there are no limits. Parents, don't be afraid to say with firmness — "There are certain TV programs you will not watch; there are certain movies you won't see; there are places you won't go; and there are things you won't do with my approval!"

◆ **Fourth, laugh with them.** Lighten up! Learn to laugh! Blessed is the family where joy and laughter are heard. Humans are the only creatures in God's creation who can laugh, weep, and blush! Laughter is like sunshine in the house.

◆ **Fifth, lead them.** Don't just *tell* them what is right, *show* them! Show the meaning of character by demonstrating it. Train them by going before! Demonstrate contentment, courage, courtesy, fairness, honesty, friendliness, self-control, generosity, gratitude, and thrift. And by all means, lead them to the Lord.

The bottom line is: be honorable parents by believing, obeying, and honoring God in your life! †

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. preaches for the Walnut Street congregation in Dickson, Tennessee, U.S.A.

The Plastic Years

*They pass so quickly — the days of youth —
and the children change so fast,
And soon they harden in the mold,
and the plastic years are past.
So shape their lives while they are young,
this be our prayer, our aim,
That every child we meet shall bear
the imprint of His name.*

— Author Unknown

Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the gospel of John, chapter twenty-one, NKJV.

1. Did the disciples see Jesus after His death? (V. 1)
2. Name the ones who saw Him at the Sea of Tiberias? (V.1)
3. What did the disciples decide to do? (V. 3)
4. When the morning had come, "_____ ? (V.4)
5. What did He ask them? (V. 5)
6. When did the disciples realize that the One who spoke to them was Jesus? (V. 6,7)
7. What did the disciples see when they came to the shore? (V. 9)
8. What did Jesus tell them to do? (V. 10)
9. Why did none of the disciples ask who this person was? (V. 12)
10. After they had eaten breakfast, what did Jesus ask Peter? (V. 15)
11. How did Peter answer? Did He declare that He loved Jesus more than the other disciples?(V. 15)
12. What work did Jesus give Peter to do? (V. 15)
13. What did He do again? (V. 16)
14. The third time Jesus questioned Peter, He changed the type of love from agape to phillial, coming down to what _____ had said. (V. 17)
15. What did Jesus foretell about peter's old age? (V. 18).
16. Jesus spoke this, signifying by _____ ? (V. 19)
17. _____ is believed to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved". (V. 20)
18. When Peter saw John, what did he ask? (V. 21)
19. Did Jesus promise anything about John? (V. 22,23)
20. According to verse 24, who was writing these things?
21. Were all the things that Jesus did recorded?

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

PROVERBS 17:22



Bob was supposed to make a business call at a certain hour of the night. While waiting he fell into a deep sleep. When the alarm sounded on his clock, he came groggily awake with a start, remembered his call and dialed the number.

Hearing, half asleep, the recorded message of an answering service, he gathered his thoughts and worded a brief summary of his purpose for calling, ending with, "In Jesus' name, Amen."

Too late he came wide awake to the fact it was *a message* he had spoken, not *a prayer!* And he realized, too, to his chagrin that there was no way for him to erase his recorded words...



She's always late.... Her ancestors arrived on the Juneflower.

A fisherman returned to shore with a giant marlin that was bigger and heavier than he. On the way to the cleaning shed, he ran into a second fisherman who had a stringer of a dozen baby minnows. The second fisherman looked at the marlin, turned to the first fisherman and asked, "Only caught the one, eh?"



The duffer played a round of golf with the club pro. At the end, he asked the pro, "What do you think of my game?"

The pro shrugged and replied, "It's all right, I suppose. But I still prefer golf."



The officer pulled over a carload of ladies who were driving on an interstate at exactly 22 miles per hour. When asked why, the driver explained that that was the posted speed limit. "No, ma'am," explained the officer. "That is the highway number." He further observed that the other passengers were pale and very quiet. "Is anything wrong with your companions?" he inquired.

"No," she explained. "We just got off Route 119."

PROVERBS 17:22

I heard that the airlines are cutting back. On one flight, instead of movies, the plane buzzed a drive-in theater. On another flight the pilot asked the passengers to pass around pictures of their grandchildren and other family members.



President Woodrow Wilson once received a call in the middle of the night that informed him that one of his appointees had just died. The sleepy president muttered his sorrow, "That is too bad."

"Yes, it is a tragedy," replied the acquaintance. "Do you think I might take his place?" There was a pause at the other end of the line before the president replied, "It's all right with me, if it's all right with the undertaker."



One good thing about getting old is that you can sing in the bathroom while you brush your teeth.



Margie looked at her boyfriend with great disapproval. "That's the fourth time you've gone back for more cake and ice cream, Sam," she

said. "Doesn't it embarrass you?"

"Not at all," answered Sam. "I just keep telling everyone it's for you."



The policeman brought four boys before the judge. "They were causing an awful lot of commotion at the zoo, Your Honor," he said.

"Boys," said the judge sternly, "I never like to hear reports of juvenile delinquency. Now I want each of you to tell me your name and what you were doing wrong."

"My name is George," said the first boy, "and I threw Peanuts into the elephant pen."

"My name is Pete," said the second boy, "and I threw Peanuts into the elephant pen."

"My name is Mike," said the third boy, "and I threw Peanuts into the elephant pen."

"My name is Peanuts," said the fourth boy.



The patient in a psychiatrist's office told the doctor that he kept thinking of himself as a dog.

"That's silly," said the doctor. "How long has this been going on?"

"Since I was a puppy," the patient answered.

Old Testament

Law of Moses Still in Effect

Galatians 4:4; Matthew 5:17

Thief Under Law of Moses

Romans 7:1-8; John 1:17

Law Nailed to the Cross

Colossians 2:13,14;

Ephesians 2:14-16

Testator Can Ignore Will

John 10:28; Mark 2:10,11

Testament Not Yet in Effect

Hebrews 9:16,17; 10:9,10

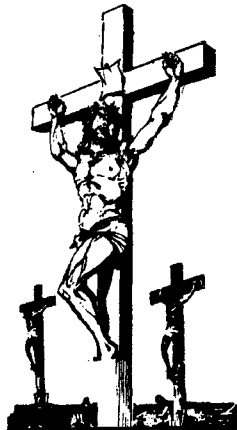
**Thief Possible Backslider;
Understood Christ to be "Lord"**

Mark 1:4,5; Luke 7:29,30

Died Before Will Probated

Romans 4:14; Galatians 3:18

The Thief on the Cross



New Testament

New Testament in Force

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 2:2,3

We Are Under Christ

Romans 7:1-8; Galatians
3:23-29

The Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:19,24; Romans 7:7

Inherit by Terms of Will

Hebrews 5:8,9; Colossians 3:24

Christ's Will Now Effective

Hebrews 7:18,19; 9:15-17

Heirs According to His Will

Galatians 3:26-29; 4:7

Examples for Sinners Today

Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-39

Dillard Thurman

What God Gives, What God Sends, to Men

James 1:13-18

Earl Edwards

13 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

14 *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*

15 *Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

16 *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

18 *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*

INTRODUCTION:

A. Men tend to "pass the buck."

Example: Adam in Genesis 3:12.

B. In James' time, some had fallen victim to temptation when "under trial," and had blamed God (1:12).

C. But James corrects that notion in these verses.

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

I. God Is Not Responsible For Temptations/Evil (verses 13-15).

- A. He is not tempted by evil. See Matthew 5:48. Therefore:
- B. He doesn't tempt others.
 - 1. He will test us to strengthen us (wanting us to overcome).
 - 2. He never tempts in the sense of desiring our fall.
 - 3. This tempting is Satan's role, 1 Corinthians 7:5.
- C. Men are tempted by their own lust (verse 14).
 - 1. Here it means overruling desire for evil.
 - 2. Examples in:
 - a. James' time.
 - b. Our time.

II. God Is Responsible For Good (verses 17,18).

- A. He gives "*every good thing*" from above (verse 17).
 - 1. Some of His good to them (examples).
 - 2. Some of His good to us (examples).
- B. He is the "*Father of heavenly lights.*"
 - 1. Since He gave us "light" (Matthew 4:16), He can't be responsible for "darkness" (evil). This would be mutually exclusive.
- C. Christians are an example of God's giving good things (verse 18).
 - 1. We were "*brought forth by His will.*"
 - 2. He did this through the "*word of truth,*" the Gospel.
 - a. First century Christians.
 - b. Those of us who are Christians today.
- D. He is still now sending "*good from above*" (verse 17).
- E. In fact, we are only "*the firstfruits*" among His creatures (verse 18).

CONCLUSION:

- A. No one can reasonably attribute evil/darkness to the "*Father of Lights.*"
- B. The person who practices sinning is following his "*own lust,*" and should repent.
- C. He needs to seek God's way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). †

Earl Edwards is Director of Graduate Studies in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, U.S.A.

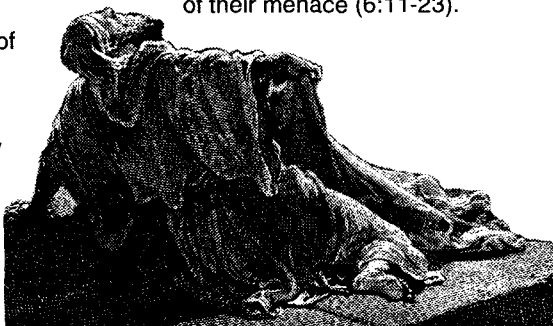
Who Am I?

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

1. **100** Fifty strong men looked for my master for three days (2 Kings 2:16,17).
2. **90** The water supply in a city where I was staying caused death and barrenness (2:19-22).
3. **80** Even today, that city's water supply is from that spring of flowing water which God "healed" through me.
4. **70** During one period, when Jehoram was king of Israel at Samaria, and Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, they went together with the king of Edom (Esau's descendants) made an alliance to fight against the king of Moab (3:1,9,5).
5. **60** God caused the valley to be filled with water, and a red reflection on it caused the Moabites to think the three kings had fought and killed off each other's armies (3:20,22,23).
6. **50** Trying to turn the tide of battle, the king took his eldest son and offered him as a burnt offering — a thing strictly forbidden by God (3:26,27).
7. **40** A woman from Shunem was blessed with a son, and then he was restored to life (4:1-37).
8. **30** Through me, God restored Naaman, captain of the armies of Syria, to health when he had leprosy (5:1-19).
9. **20** Through showing mercy to the Syrian army, I was able to rid Israel of their menace (6:11-23).
10. **10** I took the place of prophet in Israel after my master was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot (2:9-15).

My
Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.



The Only God

John Thiesen

"Is it really necessary to believe in a particular God? Isn't it enough to believe that there is some higher power or powers?"

Practically everyone admits there is a higher power. This is so obvious that it is hardly questioned by most of humanity. People have always believed in a god just from observing the beauty and harmony of nature. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1). There is also an innate longing for God within the human heart, and so we see religious devotion to a deity or deities in most nations of the world by most peoples of the world.

The Unknown God

When the apostle Paul went to Athens, he noticed that the Greeks had a god for every conceivable situation. And, just to make sure they hadn't missed any, they had erected an altar to the UNKNOWN GOD. Paul pointed out their zealotry and spoke of this God they did not know. He said, *"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you"* (Acts 17:23). He then

preached to them about the God who had made the world and all things in it and who gave His Son Jesus Christ for them, raising Him from the dead. He was showing them that there is only one true God.

Unfortunately, there are still many people in the world who do not know this true God. Paul's message to the Athenians is needed today: *"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.*

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

BIBLE QUESTIONS

for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Identifying the True God

There are not many Gods, but just One who is controlling this universe in which we live. He is the One described in the Bible, the One who created the heavens and the earth and made man in His own image. When the first man and woman sinned, He expelled them from the Garden of Eden, but immediately began preparing to send a Saviour into the world to die for their sins, His own Son Jesus Christ.

He is the God who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Ezekiel, David and many other prophets who spoke in His name in order to build a family and nation through which to send

the promised Savior. He is the one who led the Israelites across the Red Sea and the wilderness to Canaan and, after they were established, sent Jesus in the fullness of time, born of a virgin among them, to fulfill all the promises of a sin-bearer and redeemer for the whole human race.

After Jesus had accomplished His death for our sins on the cross, He conquered death when God raised Him from the dead on the third day. This same Jesus returned to God in Heaven, but with the promise that on God's appointed day, Jesus will come in the clouds with all of His holy angels, to call the dead from the graves, and to take the saved to be with Him eternally. We must believe in this one true God in order to be saved on that great day. This is because there is no other God out there to save us. Jesus said, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3). He also said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6).

Do you know this one true God? †

John Thiesen is a former missionary to Malawi and now preaches for the church of Christ in Buffalo, Missouri, USA.

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

H. L. Meeks

This question was asked of Paul and Silas by a sinner, a Philippian jailer. Their answer was, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*" (Acts 16:31). Many will say that this is all the sinner had to do. But the next two verses tell us that "*they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*"

The apostle Peter says, "*baptism doth also now save us*" (1 Peter 3:21). Not baptism only, nor faith only, nor anything else *only*, will save anyone. Jesus saves us when we do His will (see Matthew 7:21). Why was the jailer first told to believe on the Lord Jesus? They were about to preach the gospel to him and this would not do him any good if he did not believe and *obey* the gospel. Why was he baptized? Because baptism is a necessary part of the gospel (see Mark 16:16).

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

In Acts 2:37, we find this same

question in a little different form. The apostles had preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost. The hearers realized they had crucified the Lord of glory. "*They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 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 sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (verse 38). They already believed, but there was something else they must do. What was it? They must repent and be baptized.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Again in a little different form, this question is asked and answered in Acts 9. Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians. Jesus appeared to him directly from heaven and made Himself known to Saul. Saul said, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" The Lord said, "*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*" Why did Jesus not tell Saul to believe? Because he

BIBLE QUESTIONS

had *already* believed when Jesus made himself known to him. Saul now was penitent. He called Jesus "Lord" and was ready to do what Jesus wanted him to do.

So, why did Jesus not tell Saul to be baptized? Because, **not since Jesus arose from the dead and went back to heaven has any heavenly messenger told any person on earth, directly, what he must do to be saved!** Search the Scriptures and you will see that this is so. "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels*" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Jesus told Saul to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. Saul was blind, "*but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus, and he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*" Jesus sent Ananias, a disciple, to Saul to tell him what to do. Ananias, the inspired messenger, explained the miraculous appearance of Jesus to Saul. Then he told Saul what he must do: "*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16).

What Must We Do To Be Saved?

What must any person today do to be saved? Just what people on the day of Pentecost did! Just what Saul of Tarsus did! Just what the Philippian jailer did! Just what all the other New Testament examples

of salvation in Christ did! **The Bible tells us** — before all the human creeds were originated — **that all of those early believers were baptized so that their sins could be forgiven!**

The Way To Heaven

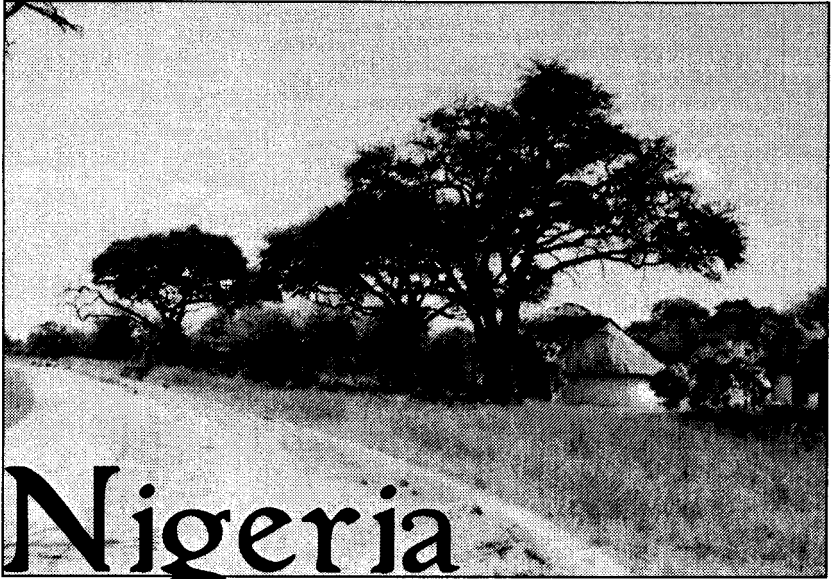
Hear the gospel, Matthew 17:5; Romans 10:17. **Believe in Christ**, John 8:24; John 20:31. **Repent of all sins**, Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30. **Confess Christ**, Matthew 10:32; Acts 8:37. **Be baptized**, Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3.

The obedient believer **dies** to sin (Romans 6:2); he is **buried** (immersed) by baptism into death, and is **raised** to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3,4). He is added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47). It will be the right church. There are many churches in the world but the Lord will add to none other than the one He built (Matthew 16:18).

Is this all? No, it is just the beginning of a life of loving service in the church. We must be faithful unto death, and then we shall receive a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Friend, will you obey the Savior? Will you do it today? It is urgent. *Now* is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Jesus wants to save you. †

H. L. Meeks, deceased gospel preacher of Tupelo, Mississippi, USA.



Nigeria

Land of Receptive Hearts

Evidence exists of early cultures in the land now known as Nigeria as far back as 700 B.C. From the 12th to 14th centuries, the Muslim influence has been predominant in the northern area. Portuguese and British slavers worked the area during the next two centuries. The British gained control of the country in 1861, relinquishing power in October of 1960. Nigeria became a republic in 1963.

The terrible Biafran War began in 1967 when the eastern region seceded, calling itself the Republic of Biafra. A bloody civil war ensued in which more than a million people died, many of starvation. Finally, the secession ended in 1970.

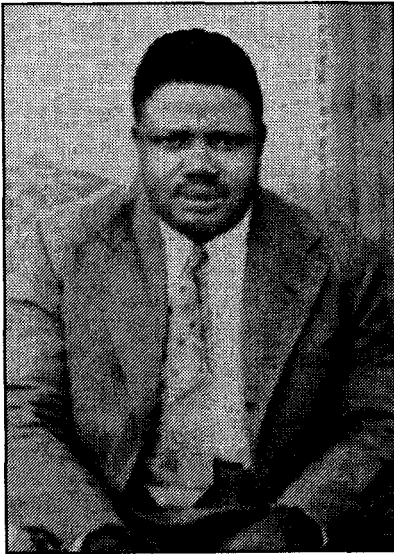
Much of Nigeria's short modern history revolves around political struggles for leadership, often bringing great upheaval and deaths. During most of the time since independence, government has been in the hands of some type of military authority. At the present time, General Abdulsalam Abubakar is Head of State, after having promised elections so that the coun-

try can return to civilian leadership.

But the air of uncertainty and even the terrible physical dangers have not obliterated the spirituality that is most common in the hearts of the Nigerian people. In the midst of poverty, repression, and hardship, the gospel has spread and the church has grown.

Brief Spiritual History

In June of 1949, C.A.O. Essien, a policeman from eastern Nigeria, completed a Bible correspondence course from the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, and was baptized. Within two years, Eldred Echols and Boyd Reese reported the exist-



C.A.O. Essien

tence of forty-five churches which had developed under Essien's teaching and leadership.

According to Dr. Henry Farrar's thirtieth anniversary reflections, a Bible training college was begun in Ukpom in 1954. In 1957 Bill Nicks reported that there were 45 Ibo churches and over 300 Efik congregations surrounding Essien's home base in Eastern Nigeria.

In 1958 Onicha Ngwa Bible Training College was begun near Aba, training local men as preachers and teachers of God's word.

The number of families and men involved on long-term and short-term basis in the Nigerian work has been tremendous. Though a partial list is given, many must be omitted, some through simple lack of knowledge of all the details as they have unfolded through the years.

In 1952, at the encouragement of Essien for the Lawrence Avenue church to send workers, families gradually began to come. The Howard Hortons and James Johnsons arrived in 1952. In subsequent years others came to work: Elvis Huffard, Wendell Broom, Lucien Palmer, Bill Nicks, John Beckloff, Bob Dixon, Henry Huffard, Windell Howard, Dr. Robert Whittaker, Nancy Petty Kraus, Janice Bingham, and Clarence and Patty Wilson.

Much of the outreach in Nigeria

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

has been funneled through schools, colleges, and medical service. These thrusts continue to be paramount, organized and supported through the efforts of African Christian Schools, long headed by Lucien Palmer and Willie Cato, and African Christian Hospitals Foundation, whose current president is Dr. Glenn Boyd.

World Bible School has had a tremendous impact in Nigeria. For many years, a Canadian brother, Ralph Perry, coordinated much of this effort. Steve Worley and Doug Wheeler make one to three trips a year in behalf of WBS and students.

The people of Nigeria have proved to be not only warm and

responsive toward the gospel for themselves, but their immediate quest following baptism has been the spreading of the message far and wide.

Local men who have given faithful years of service include Stephen Okoronkwo, Andrew Isiip, Jacob Achinefu, Nelson Isonguyo, Monday John Akpakpan, Dr. Timothy John Akpakpan, and Dr. S.P. Ekanem.

These combined efforts have resulted in approximately 2000 congregations, with 250,000 Christians. The heaviest population of Christians is in the Eastern area, with the Muslim-held Northern Nigeria being the least evangelized. †

Our thanks especially to Joyce R. Anderson, former missionary to Nigeria who now works in the Nashville office of *African Christian Schools Foundation*, for her help in contacting current and former missionaries for articles and reports for this issue of "From the Heart of...". With such a success story and long history of wide-spread work, it was not possible to include all of the material submitted. Our sincere apologies for the lack of space.

We rejoice with workers and supporters that Nigeria is so responsive to the gospel. With this edition of *The Voice of Truth International*, we will begin printing and shipping a Nigerian Edition, to add to the tools being used in evangelizing that English speaking country. In response to requests, we also supply many books to Christians and students throughout Nigeria. JCC

Nigerian Christian Bible College

In February of 1954 the **Nigerian Christian Bible College** was begun by pioneering missionaries at Ukpom Abak in Akwa Ibom State. These families included the Rees Bryants, Douglas Lawyers, Jim Masseys, and Bill Nicks.

The work of these dedicated families, coordinated with the supportive work of **African Christian Schools Foundation** in Nashville, TN in raising funds and workers, has resulted in a strong work being developed in an ever-increasing radius around the college.

The 41st graduation ceremony for the Ministerial department has been held, with a total of 134 students completing their work. As these men join their fellow-graduates in the field, the tremendous value of the college will continue to be compounded, creating a continuing "Chain of Service" so aptly named and described by Henry Huffard, President of ACSF.

Funds are currently being raised for the establishment and construction of a new **West Nigeria Christian College** in Abeokuta. †

Ios School of Biblical Studies

The primary purpose of the **Ios School of Biblical Studies** is to train men as preachers and teachers for the growing churches in northern Nigeria. The basic premise is to produce *evangelistic* leaders, and the **School does this through sending its students and faculty into the villages of the three surrounding states every weekend.** As Solomon Aguh, founder and director of the School, has said, "*Evangelism is the key to all that goes on around here!*"

And the School has results to prove the success of its program.



Solomon Aguh

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

219 people were brought to Christ through this "weekend evangelism" during the past year!

Each outing is normally two days, Saturday and Sunday, with about 40 students participating in each outing. These men conducted over 4,000 Bible studies during the year, with each study averaging more than an hour and a half.

In addition to the baptisms, 55 people were brought back to the Lord. Many of these are WBS students who had been baptized but were too far away to worship with a congregation. Since the number of congregations in northern Nigeria

has increased tremendously through the work of the School, these churches are not so far away now. The students find the WBS converts, strengthen them through additional studies, then place them with a congregation.

Excellent facilities have been and are being built for the continued growth of the School. Newest among these is the Keith and Mildred Tester Library, named in honor of a Memphis, TN couple that has given much of themselves and equipment for the work in Nigeria.†

Ray Cox works with the Rainbow church in Gadsden, AL, U.S.A.

The Nigerian Christian Hospital



The peaceful and beautiful grounds of the Nigerian Christian Hospital, established in Onicha Ngwa in 1964.

Medical evangelism has been a significant part of the work of the church in Nigeria. **Nigerian Christian Hospital** is now 33 years old, and it has had an enormous impact on the health and mortality of the area of its district in eastern Nigeria. Its evangelistic efforts have also been far-reaching. Today the greatest concentration of congregations is within a 50-mile radius of the institution.

Those involved in the work believe that we have two basic responsibilities. One is to preach the Gospel and the other is to minister to our fellow man as we have opportunity.

The Nigerian Christian Hospital has been a vital part of the most successful missionary effort the brotherhood has experienced. †

Dr R. Maurice Hood participates in the Hospital's medical program.

The Palmer Memorial Hospital

The most recent addition to the medical services program in Nigeria is the Palmer Memorial Hospital. The home village of C.A.O Essien was selected because of his introduction of the gospel to Nigeria, and because of his untiring efforts, until his death, to evangelize the country.

Lucien Palmer, former missionary to Nigeria, raised the money for the hospital which is now in the third very

successful year of operation. Two full-time physicians and nurses provide patient care. †

H. Glenn Boyd, President, International Health Care Foundation.



Auxiliary nurses in training at Palmer Memorial Hospital, located in the small village of Ikot Usen, the home of C.A.O.Essien.

World Bible School

Who, among those involved in World Bible School work, has not been keenly aware of the thousands upon thousands of students from Nigeria who have written for Bible courses? Many Christians have had part in the spread of the gospel through these efforts, first begun by Jimmy Lovell in the 1960's. Some stayed at home and graded thousands of courses. Others made regular follow-up trips to work face-to-face with students.

Steve Worley is one of those missionaries. He writes concerning a recent WBS workshop: "Starting in 1988 with only 10 evangelists, this annual World Bible School Workshop is designed to educate and encourage evangelists involved

in the WBS efforts in Northern Nigeria. Many of these men work in isolated villages among a very strong Moslem or pagan population. Coming together for a week each year allows them to learn more of God's word and fellowship with their brothers in the Gospel.

"Tex Williams was our guest speaker. This was Tex's first visit to Northern Nigeria to visit with follow-up evangelists. It was enjoyable to see the evangelists meet and fellowship with Tex, whom they had heard so much about through their WBS students and teachers."

Westover Hills Church of Christ in Austin, TX now sponsors **World Bible School** under the leadership of Tex Williams.



Participants in a World Bible School Workshop in Jos, N. Nigeria.

Hope and Mercy through God's Word and Work

Henry Farrar

Nigerian Christian Hospital is in rural villages Onicha Ngwa and Nlagu. Most people there live in houses having packed earth walls and floors and thatched palm roofs. Their water comes from a nearby stream. The average family income is \$200 a year and the people survive by subsistence farming of one-half acre gardens to two-acre gardens for each family. They grow yam and cassava mainly, and a little corn and pumpkins. Thank God for trees bearing palm oil, oranges, bananas, coconuts, mangoes, papayas, and for pineapple plants. There are a few chickens and pygmy goats. The diet is perilously low in protein.

The life expectancy is forty-four years! In addition to malnutrition, unsafe water supplies cause very prevalent gastroenteritis with disability and sometimes death. Salmonella and typhoid are common. Malaria is hyperendemic. Infant mortality of 50% thirty years ago has thankfully improved, but still is 20%. Hookworm, filariasis, ascariasis, amoebiasis are common.

Medical and school work have always gone hand in hand with telling the good news of Jesus. The

earliest missionaries and churches dreamed of hospitals and schools in their villages. "We can teach our people the truth about Jesus but how can we do it without schooling to help and medical care to fight off our diseases?" Nigerians have asked time and time again.

The one building of NCH of 1965 has given way to thirteen buildings! In excess of 30,000 people are treated each year.

The integration of teaching the word of God to the patients and follow-up of interested patients is in the hands of two of the finest preachers of the gospel I know of anywhere. Jacob Nwankwo and Daniel Ogbonna have a total of sixty-five years preaching experience between them!

Recently in their studies with a patient, he decided he wanted to be born again. It was quite a thrill to see a man baptized with "heart dropsy", swollen from congestive heart failure. He had a heparin-lock IV in his arm and four physicians nearby as he stood there confessing, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

We sang there at the river and all the way back to the hospital. †

Vignettes of Victory in Nigeria

Clarence and Patty Wilson

We were in Nigeria to teach in the School of Biblical Studies in Jos.

"There is a man who says he was baptized six years ago and believes as we do. However, down there in his village, the people refuse to listen to him because of his youthful age. Will you come for evangelism?"

Thus, another adventure in weekend evangelism begins. We travel down to this village on Friday afternoon with two students from the school. We meet the young man, then in his twenties, who had been immersed into Christ while a student in secondary school. As we discuss the Scriptures with him, it is clear that he is a true Christian, trying to follow the Bible's teachings.

A crowd gathers to hear what this visitor has to say about the Bible. This village is made up of serious Bible students, not pagans

who have no knowledge of the Scriptures. However they are in bondage to a denominational church. As we study with them on Friday evening, all day Saturday, and also on Saturday evening, skepticism gives way to joy and freedom!

The people begin to ask, "Do you mean we don't have to send our contribution to the church headquarters in the capital city? We

can use whatever we collect here for the poor and needy right here in our village? We don't have to

wait for a pastor to come here two times in a year to pass communion for us? There is no need to sit in a baptism class for weeks or months before being qualified to be baptized? No one will set my tithe amount for me? I don't have to have my baptism card signed and be up-to-date with my tithes paid before I will be eligible for marriage or burial by the church?!"

Freedom!

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

The questions continue like that for hours as we open the Bible and study God's Word. More than twenty-five people make a decision to obey Christ by being buried with Him in scriptural baptism. The entire denominational church is con-

verted to Christ on Saturday and worships afresh on the Lord's day.

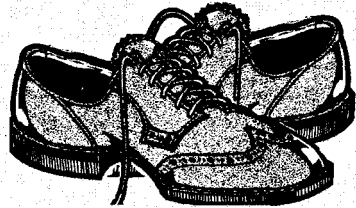
"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). †

Sweet Feet!

"What in the world happened to your shoes, John?" Just before chapel was set to start at the School of Biblical Studies, we were shocked at the unkempt appearance of one of our best students, who is normally the very image of neatness. His usually shiny and polished shoes were falling apart as he walked into the chapel, and he was limping sorely.

It was a typical Monday morning with students reporting on their weekend evangelism experiences. When it came John's turn to make his report he gave the vital statistics of the weekend's work: how many people were personally studied with, the number of baptisms, the number of persons in worship, etc.

John's evangelism site was a very "bush" place, far, far off the beaten track! To reach it one must travel by bus for 100 kilometers, 12 kms by joining a "taxi" with six or eight other people, 5 kms on the back of a motorcycle "taxi", and then walk the final 4 kms over extremely dusty and rocky terrain.



However, the people in this area are very interested in the good news about Jesus, so one of our students is sent out every weekend to work with this growing congregation. This time it had been John's turn to go, and his only pair of shoes was ruined by the harsh conditions of the place where he went to preach and teach the gospel of Christ! His feet were sore and hurting after the long trek into and out of that rocky village.

Then, our beloved John, with a straight face and a very dry wit, recommended to the school's director that each and every preaching student be given the opportunity to go and serve in this same village! As he sat down, the whole chapel erupted into laughter!

The point was well taken by all of his fellow students, who fully grasped the significance of sacrifices each

Christian must be willing to make in order to advance the kingdom of God, even in difficult places under harsh circumstances. Yet, none of them wanted to spoil their own good shoes and suffer the muscle aches that John was having, for the sake of the gospel. The automatic reaction in each mind was, "Let me go to some easier place!"

John mended his shoes and continued wearing them for months until he could afford to replace the battered pair.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!'" (Romans

10:15).

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation..." (Isaiah 52:7).

Trips such as these tell us that, indeed, *"the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field"* (Matthew 9:37,38).

Jesus says even today, *"I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together..."* (John 4:35-38).

Clarence and Patty Wilson served Nigeria in the Jos area, he as a teacher and she as a nurse. They are now in Searcy, AR, U.S.A.

"Stedfast, Unmovable"

Dayton Keesee

A demonstration is more dramatic than a declaration. A life is more motivating than a law. Jesus on the cross touches our hearts more than the sermon on the mount!

Two messengers I met in Nigeria stirred my soul more than Scripture. The reason is because their lives are an extended *demonstration* of the Scripture Paul wrote: *"Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Uzim Bartholomew and Sunday O. Ekanem were two students (among about 16) who enrolled at the newly started Bible Training College in Enugu in 1967. That same year the Nigeria-Biafran Civil War caused that school

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

to be terminated, as all Americans were evacuated from that region. Thirty-one years later, as I returned as an instructor at Nigerian Christian Bible College at Ukpom, I met these same two brethren. Permit me to share with you their lives over those 31 years, for it surely will stir your souls.

About midway through my stay at NCBC, brother Uzim came by to visit with me. Thirty-one years had taken their toll on his body, but his spirit was so alive (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)! With a joyful tone he thanked God for sparing him during the three years of war, after which his desire to preach led him to enter the Bible Training College at Onicha Ngwa. Three years later he graduated and returned to his home area to preach.

Today brother Uzim is one of the elder statesmen among brethren in that area. His zeal and effectiveness are evident. There were about four congregations in Ebonyi State when we were evacuated in 1967. Today there are more than 100, the result of the zeal of brother Uzim and others he helped bring to Christ.

Brother Uzim did not come just to see me. One of the students at the college, preparing to preach (along with three others from that state), is his son! What a trail he has blazed, and what a record of steadfast service he has left!

Sunday O. Ekanem is another example of determination to prepare himself to preach the word. His skill and hunger as a student led him after the war to come to Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, TX. As an instructor there at the time, I had the second chance to help Sunday grasp God's word. Upon his graduation he returned to Enugu, spearheading a television and radio ministry, plus helping brethren in that city to grow from 2 to 12 congregations.

Sunday also came to NCBC to see me shortly after my arrival. He has some silver in his hair, but his smile and spirit are young and vibrant. Today he is one of the preachers in the oldest congregations in Nigeria, at Ikot Usen, while also serving the vital role as Manager of Palmer Memorial Hospital.

Sunday had not come to NCBC just to see me. He, too, has a gifted son — and quite a singer — in that training program, preparing to preach.

Whether domestically or evangelistically, these two brethren are a *demonstration* of "*abounding in the work of the Lord*". I hope their lives will be a *motivation* to you who read to take the Lord's law, go, and do likewise! †

Dayton Keesee of Midwest City, OK, U.S.A. continues to make preaching trips to Nigeria.

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Please use my special contribution to send more copies of this issue to the mission fields of the world.

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- Give a copy to each member of the congregation.
- Draw from them for bulletin articles.
- Keep them on display in libraries, hospitals, doctors' offices, barber shops, beauty parlors, and other public places where there is a magazine rack.
- Send them to your WBS students.
- Give subscriptions as birthday, anniversary, etc., gifts.
- Encourage the young men in the congregation to draw materials from them for their public devotionals.

(Return this form in an envelope with your check to the following address)

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Springfield, MO 65803

Att. Byron Nichols



ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search — 21 (from page 88)

Who Am I? page 94)

1. Yes, on many occasions.
2. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John, and two others who were not named.
3. "to go fishing in the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee).
4. Jesus stood on the shore.
5. "*Children, have you any food?*"
6. when they had followed His instructions and had caught too many fish for them to be able to pull the nets into the boat.
7. a fire of coals and fish laid on it, and bread.
8. to bring some of the fish they had caught.
9. because they knew that it was the Lord.
10. "*Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (agape love; all-encompassing spiritual love, by deliberate intent) Me more than these?*"
11. "*Yes, Lord, You know that I love (phillial love; the warm love of friendship, emotional) You.*"
12. "*Feed My lambs.*"
13. He asked the same question, and answered, "*Feed My sheep.*"
14. "We have seen the Lord."
15. **That as a young man he had been in control, but in his old age others would come and take him where he did not wish to go.**
16. "*what death he would glorify God*".
17. John, son of Zebedee.
18. "*But Lord, what about this man?*".
19. No.
20. John, the disciple Jesus loved.
21. No.

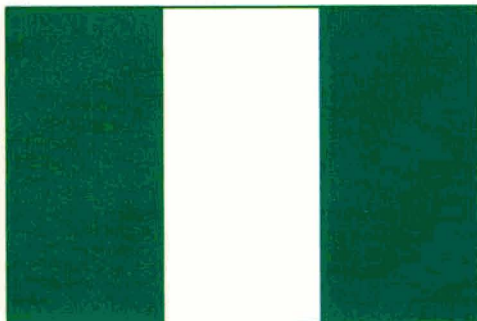


The Book of 1 Peter, page 46

The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides forever. — 1 Peter 1:24,25

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Federal Republic of Nigeria



Government: In Transition

Head of State: Governor General Abdulsalam Abubakar

Secular Facts:

Location: On the southern coast of West Africa, bordered on the west by Benin, Niger on the north, and Chad and Cameroon on the east.

Land Mass: 356,668 square miles, one-third larger than Texas.

Population: 110,532,242; density per square mile, 310.

Major Cities: Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan.

Language: English, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo.

Literacy: 57%, with free and compulsory education.

Religion: Islam (50%), believers in Christ (40%), Indigenous (10%).

Economy: *Annual per capita income:* \$300. Arable land, 33% with 54% of the population in agriculture. Inflation, 60%, unemployment, 28%.

TV sets per 1000 population, 38; radios, 170 per 1000; telephones, 1 per 275; daily paper circulation, 18 per 1000.

Major products: Crude oil, gas, coal, tin, rubber, cocoa, palm products, corn, rice, textiles, cassava, illicit drugs.

Monetary Unit: Naira.

The Church:

Congregations: Approximately 2000 congregations with more than 250,000 members.

History: Shortly after World War II, C.A.O. Essien, a Nigerian policeman, mentioned to his German pen pal that he would like to learn more about the Bible. He was told of a Bible correspondence course offered by the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, TN. Essien's studies resulted in his conversion, and he began to teach others. Within five years, 1000 had been baptized and 60 congregations begun.

Pioneer families began to move to Nigeria in 1952 — the Howard Hortons and James Johnsons, followed by many others in subsequent years. Christian hospitals and schools and colleges were established and have been maintained through the years, in spite of the civil and political turmoil which have wreaked havoc on a country potentially rich in resources but under-developed and over-populated. In the Biafran War, alone, more than one million died.

Financial and organizational aid of American brethren have been constant through the efforts of African Christian Schools and African Christian Hospital Foundation, based in the U.S. These coordinated works have been widely effective in spreading the gospel, as well as maturing Christians as preachers, teachers, and church leaders.

When World Bible School was introduced in Nigeria, the response was overwhelming, greater than in any other nation in the world. Truly, the Nigerians are a spiritual people, with a hunger for the truth.