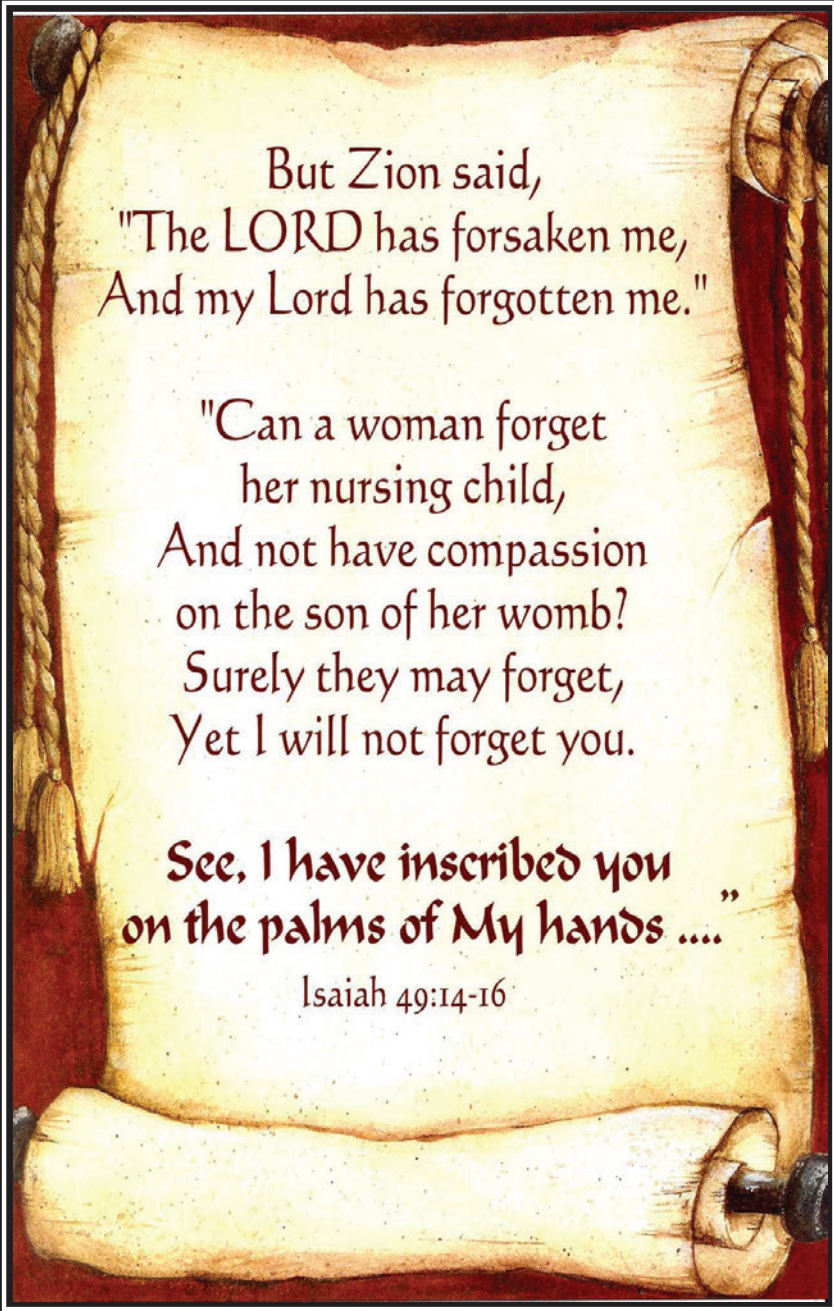


VOLUME NINETY

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

The close of God's beautiful day!

A scroll with text on a parchment background. The scroll is tied with a thick, braided rope at the top and bottom. The text is written in a dark, serif font. The scroll is set against a dark red background.

But Zion said,
"The LORD has forsaken me,
And my Lord has forgotten me."

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

See, I have inscribed you
on the palms of My hands"

Isaiah 49:14-16



Noah's Salvation and Our Salvation



1 Peter 3:20-21; Romans 15:4

NOAH'S SALVATION

- 1. In a World of Sin**
Genesis 6:1-5
- 2. Determined to Do God's Will**
Genesis 7:1-5; 6:22
- 3. Listened to God**
Genesis 6:9; Amos 3:3
- 4. Believed God; Obeyed**
Hebrews 11:7; John 3:36
- 5. Moved with Godly Fear**
Hebrews 11:7
- 6. God Brought Salvation in Ark**
Hebrews 11; Genesis 6
- 7. A Few Saved by Water**
1 Peter 3:21; Genesis 6-9
- 8. Must stay in Ark**
Genesis 7-9
- 9. Relationship Changed...New**
Genesis 7:24

OUR SALVATION

- 1. In a World of Sin**
1 John 5:19; Rom. 3:23; John 3:16-17
- 2. Determined to Do God's Will**
John 17:17
- 3. Hears God's Word**
Matt. 17:1-5; Deut. 18:15
- 4. Believes God's Word in Christ**
Hebrews 11:8; John 8:24; Romans 10:17
- 5. Moves with Godly Fear**
Eccl. 12:13-14; Rom. 2:4; Acts 17:30-31
- 6. God Saves in One Body, Church**
Acts 2:47; Col. 1:18; Eph 1:22-23; 4:4
- 7. Baptism Does also Now Save Us**
1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16
- 8. Must stay in the One Body**
Rev. 2:10; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Gal. 3:26-27
- 9. Relationship Changed in Christ**
Col. 1:13-14; Rom. 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:17

THE FIGURE

THE SALVATION

A Clean Church

Ephesians 5:25-27

GOD DESIRES IT



Saved Are in the Church

- Acts 2:47
- 1 Corinthians 12:13

Saved Are Pure

- 1 Peter 1:22
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Must Remain Pure

- Matthew 5:13-16
- 1 John 1:7

SIN SPOTS IT



Restore Ering One

- Matthew 6:1
- Matthew 18:15-17

Some Sin Willfully

- Hebrews 10:26
- 2 Peter 2:21-22

Must Withdraw

- 2 Thessalonians 3:6
- Romans 16:17

GOD CLEANSSES IT



Church is Pure Again

- 1 Corinthians 5:7
- Ephesians 5:27

Has Good Reputation

- Acts 2:46-47
- Acts 5:11, 14

God is Glorified

- Ephesians 5:21
- 1 Timothy 3:15

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).



Not Everything Is a Test of Fellowship

Louis Rushmore

Not everything is a test of fellowship, but some things are, in fact, a test of fellowship. While there are many things in life and in religion that do not matter, there are a number of things, including religious beliefs and practices, that mattered yesterday, matter today, will matter tomorrow and will matter eternally. Hence, mankind must adhere to

divine instructions when it involves something that matters in both this life and in eternity. *“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23 NKJV).

Characteristically, humans frequently are given to extremes. Every facet of life demonstrates this (e.g., politics, religion, social organizations, at work, etc.). Some people are too loose with rules and values, while others oppositely are overly strict respecting procedures and beliefs. In the Lord’s church, even some Christians **do not try hard enough** to practice biblical instructions, while still other Christians **try too hard** to implement and enforce religious teaching. Those on the left of **biblical center** loose God-given teaching, while ultraconservative brethren essentially make rules where God did not make any. The Gospel of Christ is difficult enough to apply to one’s life, and so no one ought to take it upon himself to make it more difficult (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19).

Regarding members of the church who take a liberal approach to the Scriptures, it is misleading and deceitful for them to presume that they are *more studied* and *more mature* in the Christian faith than those with whom they disagree regarding New Testament teaching. “Oh, we used to believe like you do, but we have studied Scripture [again] more earnestly, and we

are more mature in the faith now.” Such self-aggrandizing has become the code words for excuses to introduce instrumental music (and other things, too) into Christian worship, despite the fact that the New Testament specifically defines acceptable music in worship as *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing”* (Ephesians 5:19) and *“teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing”* (Colossians 3:16).

The attitude that whatever is not specifically prohibited in New Testament Scripture is permitted dilutes Christianity to the subjectivity of each individual; it lays aside the authority of God’s Word to regulate our lives and to serve as the roadmap from earth to eternity. In addition, limiting the authority of the Bible to direct commands and laying aside apostolically approved examples as well as implied New Testament teaching (from which we are obligated to infer correctly and only what is implied) disarms God’s Word of its authority, too.



Notice that Acts 20:7 is an **approved, apostolic example** relative to the day on which (first day of the week) and the frequency of which (weekly) to partake of the Lord’s Supper. It is no wonder, then, that those who disregard approved biblical examples have no scruples about not limiting the observance of communion to Sundays, care little about how often it may be observed (monthly, quarterly, semiannually, annually) or care on what occasion it may be served and eaten (e.g., at a wedding).

Notice that for any New Testament command to apply to anyone now living, a person must **infer** from the scriptural **implication** that some of what was originally spoken or written to a first century audience applies to someone to whom it was not written and whose name does not appear in Scripture. Without implication and inference, none of God’s Word would apply to anyone today!

As a final attempt to justify departure from the authority of God’s Word (and to quiet dissenters to their apostasy), apostates clamor for tolerance based on Romans 14. This, too, is an abuse of the biblical context. Romans 14 concerns matters over which brethren had differences of **opinion**, not

matters that were the subject of divinely-given New Testament doctrine or teaching. It is wholly wrong for anyone to attempt to relegate departure from God-given instruction to merely a matter of opinion.

Departures from the Christian faith were prophesied and warnings abound about the same. ***“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables”*** (2 Timothy 4:3-4). ***“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple”*** (Romans 16:17-18). ***“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds”*** (2 John 9-11). Not everything is a test of fellowship, but some things are, in fact, a test of fellowship. †

Congratulations are in order and due brother Byron Nichols! He and his wife Gay have labored with *The Voice of Truth International* for 25 years so far. Having reached the venerable milestone of 79-years-old, brother Nichols has decided to slow down a little bit and shift only *some* of the workload associated with the production of this quarterly magazine to other World Evangelism team members. Otherwise, everything remains identical, and readers can expect the same quality and edifying religious journal on which they have come to rely for decades.

With this edition of *The Voice of Truth International*, Brother Byron assumes the distinction of Editor Emeritus, and he will continue to grace us with his editorials indefinitely. He and sister Gay intend to continue promoting the magazine as they have for so long.

We are pleased to sport four editorial spots, Louis Rushmore as Editor, Jerry Bates as Associate Editor, Byron Nichols as Editor Emeritus and J.C. Choate as Founding Editor.

The Bride of Christ

Jerry Bates



The Bible uses several images to help us understand the church. Each image reveals certain aspects of it, and none alone can provide a full picture of the church. Perhaps one of the most picturesque images of the church is that of a bride. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:2, *“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* For a few

moments let us contemplate some things this image tells us about the church.

The first characteristic is loyalty or commitment. As we all know, when one enters the covenant relationship of marriage, a deep commitment is made, and for one to betray that trust and be unfaithful is a difficult act to forgive. Likewise, this illustrates the fidelity a Christian is to have towards Christ. When one becomes a Christian, he makes a commitment to Christ. He enters into a covenant relationship with Christ and belongs to Christ, just as a husband and wife belong to each other. *“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him”* (1 Corinthians 6:17). We should value this relationship above any other relationship or possession (Luke 14:26,27).

Secondly and closely related to the above discussion, we enter into a close relationship that is like no other. No relationship on earth is closer than that of a husband and a wife. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul used the husband-wife relationship to describe the church. He said that the wife is to submit to her husband. Today, many women are reluctant to do this; however, when one considers the characteristics of the husband to which she submits, it should not be difficult. This husband loved his wife so much that he was willing to die for her. By means of this extended parallel

of a husband and a wife, Paul described the bond between a Christian and Christ. The church looks to Christ as her perfect Head, One who loves the church so much that He died for her, so that He can present her to God as a glorious church without spot or blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27). When one truly understands this, it should not be difficult to submit his life to the headship and authority of Christ.


Thirdly, we enjoy the abundant blessings of Christ's love and care. Jesus provides eternal salvation to His church (Ephesians 5:23). He also sustains and nourishes the church (Ephesians 5:29). He provides the life-giving food and water; thus, we will no longer hunger or thirst (John 4:13,14; 6:35). However, all of these spiritual blessings are only available to those who are ***“in Christ”*** or belong to Him (Ephesians 1:3). Thus, unless we are part of the church or His bride, we cannot enjoy any of these spiritual blessings.

Fourthly, the church enjoys unparalleled promises. A husband and a wife are joined to each other for “better or worse”. One never knows what the future holds for a family in this world; however, this uncertainty is not true for the church, because she belongs to the Almighty God who controls the future. Paul in Romans 8:17 stated that we are joint-heirs with Christ. Whatever eternal blessings Christ enjoys, we, as part of His body, will also enjoy. Yes, we may suffer for a while here on this earth, just as Christ suffered; however, Paul continued his analogy by saying that if we suffer with Him, ***“we will also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”*** (Romans 8:17,18). In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul compared our ***“light affliction”*** with the ***“exceeding and eternal weight of glory”***. Christ Himself promised in Matthew 19:29 that no matter what we sacrifice for Him, we will receive a ***“hundredfold and inherit eternal life”***. We cannot imagine what wonderful blessings and promises that the King of kings and Lord of lords has in store for His bride.

Finally, a bride suggests beauty. This beauty and preciousness is emphasized in Revelation 21:2, ***“Then I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*** Nothing exceeds the loveliness of a bride when she is wearing her wedding garments, especially to the bridegroom.

The bride spends much time and money picking out her perfect dress; yet, God prepares the clothes for His bride. ***“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels”*** (Isaiah 61:10). God’s bride is covered with the pure white garments of salvation that God provides. We all know how the bridegroom rejoices when he sees his bride, and that represents how Christ sees His bride. ***“And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you”*** (Isaiah 62:5).



Since the church is the bride of Christ and will enjoy all the blessings previously described, why should anyone not want to be a part of her? Anyone who thinks the church is unimportant surely doesn’t understand the nature of the church. God invites each one of us to enjoy the blessings of being His bride. Through faith in Christ, we are united with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27). ***“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”*** (1 Corinthians 12:13); thus, we are able to enjoy the lavish promises and blessings that only God can provide for His bride, both here and for all eternity. How can anyone not be interested in becoming the bride of Christ? 



Bible Names for the Followers of Jesus

Byron Nichols

God's children or people in the Old Testament were called "Israelites", but what were the followers of Jesus in the New Testament called? How were they identified? Were they given a special

name, and if so, what was it?

These questions are appropriate and important, and they deserve to be answered in keeping with what the Bible has to say about them. Names are truly important, and we are going to see that four names are used in the New Testament to identify the followers of Jesus.

The name "*disciple*" is the predominant name used in the Gospels; it is used less often in Acts and not at all in the last 22 books of the New Testament. The word means student, learner, pupil. Applied to followers of Christ, it means personal loyalty to His teaching. Jesus was known widely as a teacher, and this name shows the relationship of student to teacher. Christ's followers are **disciples** now, just as in New Testament times.

A second name given to followers of Jesus is "*brethren*" (brothers and sisters). Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 23:8, "*You are all brethren.*" This name was used more and more after the Ascension of Christ. In 1 Peter 2:17, Peter referred to the church as "*the brotherhood*". Paul used the name "*brethren*" many times in his writings. Notice these examples: (1) In 1 Corinthians 6:8 he rebuked the congregation at Corinth

for doing bad things ***“to your brethren!”*** (2) In Galatians 6:1 he said to the congregations of Galatia, ***“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass...”*** (3) In Romans 12:10 Paul urged those in the church at Rome, ***“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love...”***

“Brethren” or ***“brothers”*** shows that we have duties and obligations to one another that are special and separate from those to folks in general. Our relationship as ***“brethren”*** is so sacred that to sin against a ***“brother”*** is to even be guilty of sinning against Christ. ***“But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ”*** (1 Corinthians 8:12). As followers of Jesus, we are privileged to be **brothers** and **sisters**.



A third identifying name for followers of Christ is ***“saint”***. Because of the frequent misuse of this name in the religious world, it seems that we tend to shy away from using it, some even saying, “Oh, I’m no saint.” We ought not to be reluctant to use this very special name.

The word ***“saint”*** is used in the Bible with reference to one who is pure, who is consecrated to God, who is righteous. It is not applied to one who is viewed by God as being a religious superhero, but to anyone who


is righteous and pure in God's eyes.

The name **“saint”** appears many times in the New Testament. For example, in Acts 9:13, Ananias said, **“Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.”** Then verse 41 speaks of Peter's raising of Dorcas: **“...and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.”** There are numerous other New Testament references to Christ's followers as **“saints”**. Yes, all of His faithful followers are **saints**.

The fourth and most commonly used name today to refer to the followers of Jesus is **“Christian”**. This name, unfortunately, is used quite loosely now by a great many to refer to all who show any belief at all in Christ. A look at the use of this name in the New Testament will show that it is applied only to those who are truly *followers* of Christ, and not to those whose lives show little or no actual commitment to Christ.

***To wear the names Christian,
saint, brother/sister, or disciple is
both a privilege and a responsibility.***

The earliest obedient believers in Christ were not known by the name **“Christian”** immediately upon their conversion. We have no details as to how this came about, but we learn from Acts 11:26 that **“...the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.”** This name is also found in Acts 26 as Paul was teaching King Agrippa about Christ, and in verse 27 he asked, **“King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.”** Then in verse 28 Agrippa replied, **“You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”** We see that Agrippa understood that becoming a *Christian* involved more than just believing – he already believed, but he wasn't a *Christian*. He had not submitted himself to the will of God by becoming an obedient believer. We find *Christian* a third time in 1 Peter 4:16, **“...if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”**

To wear the names **Christian, saint, brother/sister, or disciple** is both a privilege and a responsibility. May we all pray that we wear them accordingly. 

A Tribute to Maxie B. Boren


Byron Nichols

On Sunday morning, August 14, 2016, the Lord's army lost one of its stalwart soldiers. Maxie B. Boren passed away at the age of 84, after having suffered from serious health problems over the past few years, but especially during recent months. However, he continued preaching even earlier this year.

Maxie was one of the staff writers for *The Voice of Truth International* from its beginning and became an avid promoter of the magazine.

He had delighted in preaching for 62 years. He had served several congregations as their preacher and had preached in over 700 Gospel meetings from coast to coast and in other countries. He was known and highly respected for his knowledge of the Scriptures and his love for the souls of people everywhere.

Maxie had a long and devoted relationship with the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas. He had been the pulpit preacher there; for many years he had served as the Director of the annual Fort Worth Lectureship (sponsored by the Brown Trail congregation); he had earlier served as the Director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching, and he had been serving as one of the elders of the Brown Trail congregation for several years.

For many years Maxie and his beloved wife Fran have been very special and dear friends to my wife Gay and me. We deeply regret this great loss, but we rejoice at the knowledge of the advancement of the cause of Christ that has come about as a result of the efforts of both Maxie and Fran. 



1932—2008

Let's Get the Church on the March!

J.C. Choate

It is nothing new to see a statement in most any issue of a Gospel paper telling of a particular congregation that is on the march. To verify this it is stated that some magazine is being sent to every member, the attendance is moving upward, a number of converts are being made (not as frequently now as in the past), a new building is going up, or a new gymnasium/fellowship hall is being built, etc. While all of this may seem to be progress, I have often wondered why the activity is limited to only a few congregations scattered over the country, and why there is seldom any mention of organized programs of outreach? Why shouldn't the church everywhere be on the march?

Go into any city you choose where there are several congregations of the Lord's body and, if you enquire around, you'll find that in most cases one or two of them are pushing ahead, making some progress, while the others are just coasting. Why must this be? Why shouldn't all of them be growing and seeking to do more? Why aren't more of them on the march?

In the realm of real evangelism at home and mission work abroad, you'll be surprised to find how few are doing the work, while the majority are putting very little of their budget and the effort of their members on outreach at home or abroad. Many brethren are using the same reasoning that some of our cities are using, and that is, "Spend your money at home." But even the money spent at home is too often on the building or some fellowship trip or some other project for the benefit/entertainment of those

who are members. Where is the outreach?

What is needed more than anything in this world of lost souls is for the whole church to be on the march — and yet it is not enough just to be “on the march”. Some are marching all right, but they are going backward! The church needs to be on the move, with vision and deliberate purpose. Business meetings should be focused on effective programs designed to educate and motivate the church to reach every home in their community/city and to be involved in reputable foreign works. We need to be united in our commitment to get the Gospel to our nation and to every other nation under heaven. **What are some projects that need to be developed?**

- ❑ Organize a schedule of door-knocking by the members to pass out tracts, invite people to a Gospel meeting, kids to VBS, or to some other planned activity of the church. Do this repeatedly so the church becomes known.
- ❑ Have a class to train the members, step-by-step, how to teach the Gospel to individuals in home studies.
- ❑ Get permission to set up a display on a monthly basis outside Wal-Mart or some other popular store to offer tracts, Bible courses, and home studies to interested people who stop by.
- ❑ Make a list of all sick, elderly, and delinquent members, and set up volunteer groups to make weekly visits to those in need or who are absent from the assembly.
- ❑ Involve the young people in service projects for the community.
- ❑ Support one or more foreign mission efforts. Share the reports on the work with the church, and possibly have the elders visit that work so that the needs and accomplishments will be more real to all involved.


When we catch the real spirit of Christianity and thus lose our selfishness and self-centeredness, we will be invigorated with renewed zeal, and we will see ourselves moving in the right direction. We won't be emphasizing the things of the world, the earthly, the carnal, the material, the luxuries of life, and what we can get for ourselves, but we will be putting the emphasis where it belongs — on God, Christ, the church, the will of the Lord, the eternal, the heavenly, and the souls of men. If all of us make this renewed commitment, then it won't be a matter of a few scattered congregations marching, but the entire church will be on the march! The results will be felt around the world. Lord, hasten that day! 

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

Sin — What's It Worth?	Dale Jenkins	19
The Most Dangerous Woman in the World	Stan Mitchell	21
Azazel	Jack W. Carter	23

EVIDENCES

The Ultimate Icon: Human Evolution.....	Paul Holland	24
Psalm 19:1-3.....	Author Unknown	26
Dolphin Talk	David Everson	27

THE WORD OF GOD

Seven Wonders of the Word.....	Charles Pugh III.....	30
Rightly Dividing the Word Requires Proper Bible Study..	David R. Kenney	32
Her Precious Book	David A. Sargent	34

SALVATION

The Lamb's Book of Life.....	David R. Pharr	38
The Big Question: Which?	Carroll Sites.....	40
And There Shall Be No Night There	Ardron Hinton	41

THE CHURCH

Causing Church Growth	Wayne Barrier	44
Epitaphs from the Catacombs.....	Bobby Dockery	46
“Let Brotherly Love Continue” Hebrews 13:148.....	Cecil May Jr.....	48
One as Good as Another?	Bill Dillon	50

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Calling on the Lord.....	Owen D. Olbricht.....	51
Does Truth Matter?.....	Bobby Key	53
The Validity of the Restoration Plea	Jim Howard	54
Unity and Doctrine.....	Ben Jones	56

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Hopeless? Not So Fast	Steve Higginbotham	59
He Kept Preaching the Gospel.....	Wayne Brewer	60
24 Years in the First Grade!	Jess Whitlock	62

WORSHIP

What Can You Do Saturday to Make Sunday More Worshipful?.....	J. Randal Matheny	65
Pray Without Ceasing	Dalton Key	67
On Expressing Thanks at the Lord's Table.....	Maxie B. Boren.....	68
The Words Are All that Matter?	Andy Robison	71

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Still Small Voice	Rani Timoti.....	75
Christian Example	Neil Richey.....	76

What Makes a Servant of God?.....	Bob Plunket.....	77
“My Daddy, the Preacher”	Mark N. Posey	78
I Didn’t Do Enough!	Dayton Keesee	80

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Trial-Size Marriage?.....	Danny Boggs.....	82
How Is Your Family Doing?	John Gipson	84
Saving a Marriage.....	Dale Grissom.....	85

TEXTUAL STUDIES

The Joy Chapter of the Bible.....	David Shannon	87
The End of the Matter.....	Jim Laws	89
Do these Answers Work?	Betty Burton Choate.....	91

BIBLE CHARACTERS

It Is Not How You Start	Jimmy Clark.....	95
Stephen	Jack Harriman	97
Epaphras, a Servant of Christ Jesus.....	Harvey Porter	98
What about the Flood?.....	Dennis Gullede	100
How Important Is the Mode of Baptism?.....	Charles R. Rose	101
The Nicolaitans, Who Were They?	Mike Riley.....	103

CHARTS & OUTLINES

Great Lessons from Job	Therman Hodge.....	104
Moved Away	Ken Tyler	106

CHURCH HISTORY

Is Restoration a Desirable Goal?	D. Gene West.....	107
--	-------------------	-----

FEATURES, POEMS AND FILLERS

Isaiah 49:14-16.....	inside front cover	
Noah’s Salvation & Our Salvation.....	Donnie S. Barnes	1
A Clean Church.....	Donnie S. Barnes	2
Not Everything Is a Test of Fellowship.....	Louis Rushmore	4
The Bride of Christ	Jerry Bates.....	7
Bible Names for the Followers of Jesus.....	Byron Nichols	10
A Tribute to Maxie B. Boren.....	Byron Nichols	13
Let’s Get the Church on the March!.....	J.C. Choate	14
Portrait on the Wall.....	Joslyn Ramsubhag	18
Did You Know?	Rebecca Rushmore.....	22,29,31,45,79
Verse Search	Jerry Bates.....	36
Bible Find	Louis Rushmore	43
Quick Commentary.....	Betty Burton Choate.....	58
How Do You Measure Up?	Betty Burton Choate.....	64
Have You Prayed?	Chad Ezelle	70
Humor: Proverbs 17:22.....	Byron Nichols	73
Where Is My Mission?	Louis Rushmore	81
5-Minute Bible Study	Paula Bates	86
Why Were They Called Christians?	Jerry Bates.....	90
Scavenger Hunt	Rebecca Rushmore.....	94

Portrait on the Wall

Joslyn Ramsubhag

There hangs a portrait
Yes, high upon the wall.
It's camouflaged and well secured,
We dare not let it fall

There are always passersby,
Always admiring its poise.
It stares right back to every gaze,
So oblivious to noise

There seated on an antique chair,
As though filled with emotion,
This gentleman in finest garb,
Seems in divine devotion

If you were noticed constantly,
Like this portrait on the wall,
Would others stop to admire you?
Or would they see your flaw?

If you must be a portrait,
For all the world to see,
Kindly turn your life around;
Be careful...you are for real.

Then, when others view you often,
And want to pattern you,
Imagine...Oh how wonderful,
Their lives will all be true!

Sin – What’s It Worth?

Dale Jenkins

SIN will take you further than you want to go.

Will cost you more than you want to pay.

Will hurt more people than you could imagine it will hurt.

Will leave you cold, questioning, and cynical.

Will leave you feeling empty, dirty, and worthless.

Will lie to you, deceive you, and hurt you.

Will take you for all you’re worth.

Will produce hurting, haunting guilt that will make you distrust others because you can’t trust yourself.

Will produce fear.

Will separate you from all that is good, right, and beautiful.

Will bring short-lived temporary satisfaction of carnal wants that will be gone as soon as the sin cools.

As you grow old will make you cold, distant, ugly, cynical, and full of hate.

Will steal your joy, your peace, and your friends, but most of all will damn your soul to eternity in hell.

GOD will love you deeper than you’ve ever been loved.

Will meet needs you don’t even realize you have.

Will be there when your worst enemy tries to slay you or your best friend betrays you.

Will answer questions you believed never had answers.

Will leave you fulfilled, cleansed, and valuable.

Will tell you the truth, never lead you into temptation, and hold you close in His own protection.

Will love you even when you feel worthless.

GOD

Will produce a clean and clear conscience and countenance.

Will cast away all fears.

Will help you become all that is good, right, and beautiful.


Will give you a deep inner joy and happiness that will last when all the world around you is crumbling.

As you grow old, will make you become warm, loving, beautiful, hopeful, and loved.

Will give you joy beyond compare, peace beyond understanding, and friends closer than brothers, but most of all, will assure you an eternity in Heaven.

I want God's love! I need God's love! God, help me to anoint others with Your extravagant love in my every encounter. Help me to avoid sin that will slowly but surely separate me from You. Give me that love always, and teach me to so love.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 NKJV).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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” (Romans 8:31-39). 

Dale Jenkins preaches for the Spring Meadow congregation in Spring Hill, Tennessee, USA.

GOD

The Most Dangerous Woman in the World

Stan Mitchell

She was, so Adolph Hitler once said, “the most dangerous woman in England.” Who was she? A spy? A nuclear scientist on the verge of discovering the ultimate weapon?

She outlived Hitler, Goering, Himmler, and Mengele, the gruesome foursome. Churchill, Roosevelt, Montgomery, and MacArthur, the men who stood for something right, too, have long been dead. Perhaps Americans and a new generation of Britons have forgotten what this lady meant to the nation in those dark days.

When Hitler’s bombers lit the night with tracers, when London burned, when Londoners huddled in shelters, the night finally came when Buckingham palace was also hit. Inside the palace were the two royal princesses, Elizabeth (later to be Queen Elizabeth II) and Margaret. Anxious newspaper reporters who toured the charred walls of the palace the next day asked the question that was on everybody’s mind: “Shouldn’t the royal family spirit the princesses away from the center of London for their own safety?” The queen mother’s answer was a classic: “The children




will not leave unless I do,” she began. “I shall not leave unless their father does,” she added, “and the king will not leave the country in any circumstances whatever.”

Elizabeth, the feisty Queen Mother, was exactly what the nation needed at that moment. There must have been an irresistible tempta-

GOD

tion for royalty not to share in the troubles of her subjects. After all, even a Queen Mum loves her children! With the whiff of smoke and flames in the air and the scream of falling bombs overhead, the British royal family remained in London.

When the world burned with hatred and sin, God could have sheltered His Son in the comforts of Heaven, but He did not. Jesus became human and endured the indignities of humanity. He walked the dusty streets of Palestine, had **“no place to lay his head”**, and suffered death, surely the factor all humans have in common. He came to a burning planet and was singed by the same passions we all know. This gives Him the empathy that all great figures in history have possessed. He understands our plight. From Satan’s point of view, that makes Jesus the most dangerous man in history!

“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). 

Stan Mitchell teaches in the Bible Department at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA. Used with permission from Forthright.net.



Did You Know?



Mephibosheth was a man of great character. Though he could trace his family back to a king of Israel, he remained humble. He was generously given his father’s lands, yet he did not greedily ask for more or demand what was “rightfully” his. Though the king he served ruled in place of his grandfather, Mephibosheth showed the king great respect and reverence.

When his lands were stolen by trickery, he did not seek revenge. In all things, Mephibosheth was content with what he had and thankful for the blessings in his life. You can read about Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 4, 9, 16, 19, and 21.

GOD

Azazel


Jack W. Carter

He is only mentioned in one chapter (Leviticus 16), but I regard him as one of the most significant characters of the Bible. This may seem especially strange since he is a goat. The word “Azazel” is attached to this goat either as a name or in reference to his destination.

More commonly and specifically, he is referred to as the “scapegoat”, and he played his role on the Day of Atonement. On this day, two goats were selected, one as a sacrifice and the other as “the goat of removal”. They were chosen by casting lots. After the first goat had been sacrificed, Aaron (the High Priest) placed his hands on the head of the second goat and confessed all of the sins of the entire congregation of Israel. This goat was then led into the wilderness and released. The one who led him there was required to wash and change garments when he returned.

The significance of this becomes immediately clear — it is God’s way of demonstrating how completely He removes our sins from us. I always associate this with a passage in the Book of Psalms. ***“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”*** (Psalm 103:11,12).

It is absolutely wrong to think of God as one who nurses grudges. Do we think of Him this way because holding grudges is our inclination? When God forgives our sins, that’s the end of it. Another passage helps me to understand this. ***“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea”*** (Micah 7:18,19).

Whenever I am inclined to dwell on the sins that have piled up in my life, I try to recall these passages. Then I get on with my life. 

Jack W. Carter (1930-2013) was a preacher for many years in Colorado, USA.

EVIDENCES

The Ultimate Icon: Human Evolution

Paul Holland

Paleontology is the study of ancient man. It has been referred to as the most “subjective” of all the biological sciences. That is, there are more feelings and opinions in paleontology than hard facts. William Fix, a science writer, says: “one would have thought that the history of this field was an unbroken string of triumphant verifications; instead it is mostly a catalogue of fiascoes” (*Bone Peddlers: Selling Evolution* 4). Here are two of the weaknesses in the current story of human evolution.

Fossil Evidence Is Tainted:

Consider the “Piltdown Man”. Often times, scientists will say, “Science is self-correcting”. Yes it is, if you are open-minded, not blinded by ideology. But consider how many people *were* deceived by this fraud! It took *40 years* for the truth to come to light!

I have just finished reading *Gap: The Science of What Separates Us from the Animals*, published in 2013, which continues to use Java Man as an example of human evolution! (252). It was not very long after Java Man was discovered in the late 1800s that it was proven that the teeth and femur were human but the skullcap was of a monkey! Yet, “Java Man” is *still* being promulgated as a “link” in the chain of human evolution!

Is It Art or Science?

The drawings of “ape-men” are **an artist’s rendering**. Do not let this point go in one ear and out the other! Evolutionist and anthropologist Frederick Hulse, who taught at Arizona State University at the time he wrote his textbook, wrote in *The Human Species: An Introduction to Physical Anthropology*: “... the reconstruction of an entire animal from some small bony fragment is out of the question” (79). He continues, “At the same time, we must understand that reconstructions are exercises of the imagination and are therefore subject to any preconceptions in the mind of the reconstructor [sic]. Pictures of our

EVIDENCES

own prehistoric ancestors, often used to illustrate books concerning them, can be dangerously misleading, for we know absolutely nothing about their pigmentation, the extent of the body hair, or the thickness of their lips” (80).


The Biblical Origin of Man:

If we are interested in what is *truth, what corresponds to reality*, then the Bible is the only source of information that *corresponds* to reality when it comes to the intricate nature and origin of the human being. Of course, Genesis 1:26 says, **“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”**

With this history, both Jesus and other New Testament writers are in agreement. Jesus affirms that in the beginning, God made humankind both male and female (Matthew 19:4). They did not evolve; the reproductive organs did not evolve. They were all created and formed by God.

Jesus affirms that Adam was the first man (Mark 10:6). There were no pre-human, ape-like creatures. Adam is only five days younger than the earth itself. Did Adam live in a cave once he was expelled from the Garden of Eden? Likely. In a time before construction supplies were developed, mankind lived in caves. The first cave mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 19 when Lot lived in a cave when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Living in caves is no sign of a pre-historical man nor a sign of a shallow education or a shallow knowledge.

The apostle Paul also affirmed that Adam was the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45) and that Eve was the first woman (1 Timothy 2:13). So the New Testament writers are unanimous, including Jesus Himself, that the biblical account of creation found in Genesis is true and accurate history: the *real* origin of human beings.

Scientists’ explanation of the origin of humans is full of gaps. Only the Bible gives an accurate description of the origin of humans. We are made in the *image and likeness* of the Heavenly Father. 

Paul Holland is the preacher for Swartz Creek church of Christ in Swartz Creek, Michigan, USA.

EVIDENCES

Psalm 19:1-3

Author Unknown

*“The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech;
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech nor languagee
Where their voice is not heard.”*


The earth rotates on its axis at approximately 1000 miles per hour. If that had been 100 miles per hour, our days and nights would be 10 times longer, and our planet would alternately burn and freeze. Under such circumstances, vegetation could not live.

If the earth were as small as the moon, the power of gravity would be too weak to retain sufficient atmosphere for man’s needs, but if it were as large as Jupiter, Saturn, or Uranus, extreme gravitation would make human movement almost impossible.

If we were as near to the sun as Venus, the heat would be unbearable; if we were as far away as Mars, we would experience snow and ice every night, even in the warmest regions.

If the oceans were half their present dimensions, we would receive only one-fourth the rainfall that we do now. If they were one-eighth larger, our annual precipitation would increase four-fold, and this earth would become a vast, uninhabitable swamp.

Water solidifies at 32 degrees Fahrenheit above zero. It would be disastrous if the oceans were subject to that law, however, for then the amount of thawing in the polar regions would not balance out, and ice would accumulate throughout the centuries. To prevent such a catastrophe, the Lord put salt in the sea to alter its freezing point.

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

EVIDENCES



Dolphin Talk

David Everson

Dolphins are members of a very unique group of animals in which God has instilled some truly amazing abilities. They are in a group of animals called “Toothed whales” or Odontocetes that have the ability to communicate in ways that defy any explanation other than a Divine Creator. Let’s look at just a little of what God has created in these mammals.

Dolphins use their communication abilities for sound production and reception, for navigation in dark and murky waters, and for food location. The variety of clicks, moans, trills, grunts, squeaks, and whistles are made without vocal cords. The voice box, or larynx,

EVIDENCES

of the toothed whales does lack vocal cords, but does appear to be able to create some of the sounds. They also have a region called the *nasal sacs*. This area has special structures called *sphincter muscles* that are involved in sound production. The sounds themselves are probably made when air is moved in the wind pipe and the nasal sacs. During some vocalizations, the dolphin will release air from the blow hole, but most scientists believe this is for visual effect and not necessarily connected to making the sound.

The sounds are produced in the frequency range from 0.25 to 150 hertz. It seems that this wide range of pitch is used by dolphins for various jobs. The lowest ranges seem to be reserved for social communications and most are in the 40 hertz region. The higher frequencies in the 40 to 150 hertz clicks are probably used primarily for something called *echolocation*. This process allows the toothed whales and other marine mammals to “see” with their “ears” as the clicks are reflected back to structures on their head that allow them to tell what is out in front of them.

The forehead of the dolphin has an area called the *melon* that is filled with lipids (fats). The clicks pass through the melon, and it seems to act as an acoustical lens to focus the sound waves into a narrow beam. This then travels out into the water at almost 1 mile per second. The beam then bounces off objects ahead of the dolphin and returns as echoes, where it is picked up by the fat-filled lower jawbones. This sound is then conducted into the middle and then inner ear for being heard in the auditory center of the brain.

The dolphin appears to recognize by hearing its favorite types of food, and maybe even “see” a mental image of the food quality of the fish it is considering for food. This unique set of organs for communicating and “seeing” gives these animals unmatched talking ability.

While it seems to most zoologists that there is no language for the dolphins, they can identify each other with unique signature

EVIDENCES

whistles. Mothers whistle almost continuously for several days to their calves after giving birth to help the calves identify and locate their mother in a very large ocean.

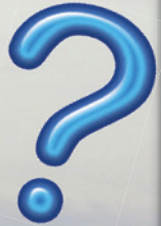
The females in the dolphin species are also impressive in the fact that they can create small, self-organized networks. These networks seem to be able to transfer information about their environment and other communications. They are as complex as any group of animals that God has created and almost as sophisticated as any human network or Internet network.

Let us praise God for the marvelous creations we can see in the world He made for us and love and serve Him all of the days of our lives. †

David Everson is an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA and has many years of education in biology.

Did You Know?

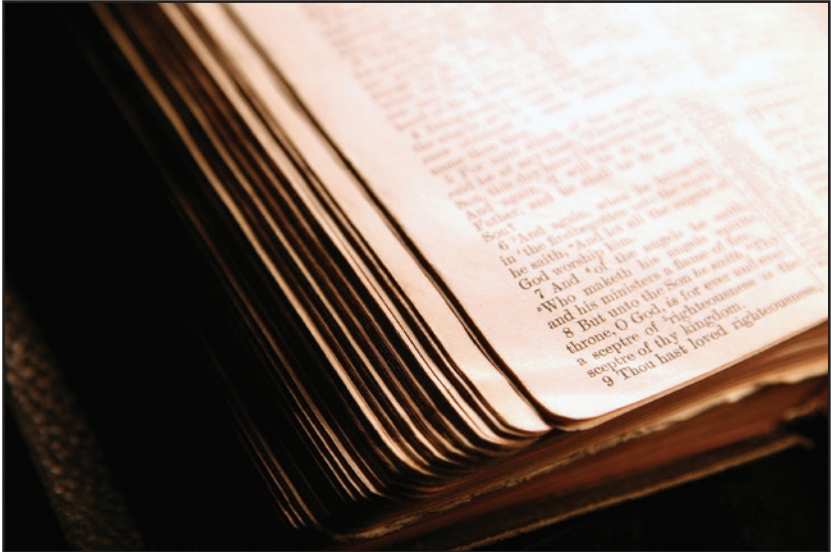
God told Noah to build an ark that was 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high (450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet high) (Genesis 6:15). Shipbuilders have discovered that this length to width to height ratio of 30:5:3 is perfect for large ships needing to carry cargo without a concern for speed in getting to a destination.



THE WORD OF GOD

SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORD

Charles Pugh III



Most have heard about “the seven wonders of the world”. More need to hear about the wonders of the Word (the Bible). The Psalmist prayed, **“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”** (Psalm 119:18 NKJV). Again, he declared, **“Your testimonies are wonderful...”** (Psalm 119:129). I am impressed with the following seven wonders of the Word.

1. **The wonder of its INSPIRATION!** Not just part of it – not just the thoughts of it – but **“ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God”** (2 Timothy 3:16). To the very jot (the tiniest letter) and tittle (the tiniest projection which distinguishes one letter from another), it is inspired (Matthew 5:18).
2. **The wonder of its FORMATION!** It didn’t all come at once, but over a

THE WORD OF GOD

period of some 1600 years. “...*Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little*” (Isaiah 28:10).

3. **The wonder of its UNIFICATION!** It is a library of 66 books, yet ONE BOOK, written by some 40 writers over approximately 1600 years, yet ONE MESSAGE (Revelation 19:10).
4. **The wonder of its REVELATION!** The Bible is the complete, final revelation of “*the things of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:10-12) which came, not by “*the will of man*”, but as holy men of God were “*moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:20,21).
5. **The wonder of its INFORMATION!** It is the greatest literature in the world, but it is more – it contains “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3). No additional information is needed, for it sufficiently equips man for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).
6. **The wonder of its PROPAGATION!** Read by all nations, classes, and races, it is the world’s best seller.
7. **The wonder of its PRESERVATION!** The most hated of all books, yet it continues. “*The word of the Lord endures forever*” (1 Peter 1:25).

“*My heart standeth in awe of thy Word*” (Psalm 119:161). ✝

Charles Pugh III has a writing ministry and resides in Vienna, West Virginia, USA.

Did You Know?

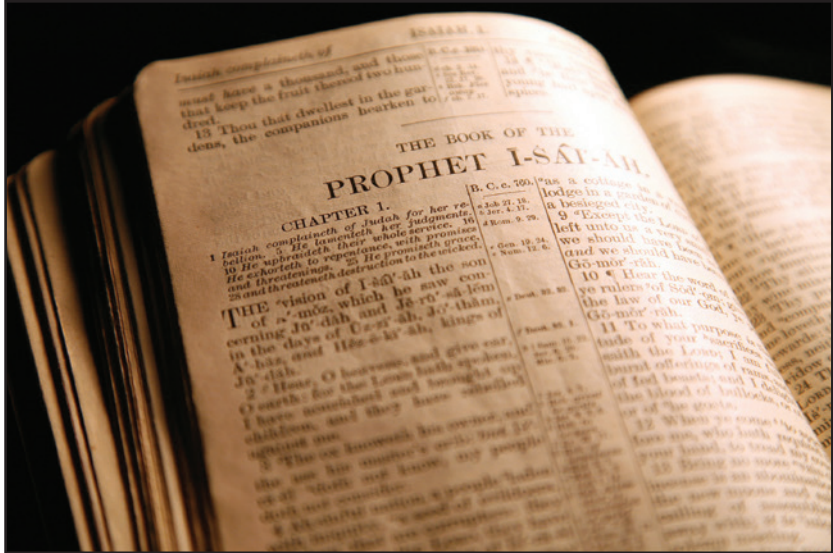
A variety of materials have been used to make written records. People carved words on stone using a sharp piece of metal or another hard stone. Clay was engraved with a sharp stone or a stick while the clay was still moist. Papyrus, a reed found around lakes and rivers, was used to make scrolls. These were written upon using a form of ink made from plants or dyes. Animal skins were turned into parchment and vellum to use for writing. Ink was also used to write on them. Other less common writing materials over the centuries include wood, ivory, bone, and shells. ✝



THE WORD OF GOD

Rightly Dividing the Word Requires Proper Bible Study

David R. Kenney



There are two extreme views about the study of the Bible. One is that the average person cannot understand the Scriptures without assistance of the elite, the scholars, or as some say, “the laity cannot understand the Scriptures without the clergy,” even though the Bible does not have groups called “laity” or “clergy”. The other extreme is that the Bible can be casually read and fully understood. The truth is between these two extremes – all can understand the Bible if they are willing to put forth the proper effort. ***“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”*** (2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV). To be diligent requires effort, and the term ***“worker”*** further emphasizes this point. One has to make the proper


THE WORD OF GOD

effort to study the Bible to learn what God would have him or her do to be pleasing to God and to be saved at the last day. *“Rightly dividing”* means to handle aright, to teach the truth correctly, which requires a proper method of studying the Bible. Certainly God would expect us to be attentive to the words He gave for us to read and know.

A Bible student must recognize three periods in which God dealt with man in the Bible. The first period was the Patriarchal (God dealt with the heads of the families); then the Mosaic (when God gave the law to Moses and the Israelites); and now the Christian (when God’s Son established the New Covenant for all). The New Testament is the law by which we will be judged today. Some mistakenly mix these covenants up and bring practices from old covenants into the New Covenant. These are different covenants, not addenda or amendments to a prior covenant.

Proper study of the Bible keeps these covenants and the ordinances that go with them in proper perspective. Additionally, one must have a logical approach to the Scriptures, recognizing that there are commands to be obeyed, examples to be followed (or avoided, depending on the context), and implications that show us how we should worship God and conduct our lives.

One neglected principle of handling the Word aright is respecting the silence of the Scriptures. Some think that if the Bible does not say we cannot do an action, then we are permitted to do it, but we should be looking in the Bible for the command, example, or implication that we can do an action. In other words, if we say, “The Bible does not say I cannot do this,” we are missing the mark. The proper question is, “Where in the Bible does it authorize you to do this?” Think how long the Bible would be if God had to tell us each and every action we were not permitted to do!

All of us should study the Bible so that we can present ourselves approved to God. 

David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA.

“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:17 KJV).

THE WORD OF GOD



HER PRECIOUS BOOK

David A. Sargent

It was her constant companion. She read it frequently. She loved to hear people read it, expound upon it, and talk about it. She was quick to counter if someone spoke against it. There was hardly a page of her book that didn't have some word or phrase highlighted or underlined. She wrote many things in the margins to help her remember the words and ideas of her precious book. She memorized as much of her book as she could, just in case it was ever taken from her. She sought to live out the words that she read in her book, for those words she accepted as the guide for her life.

**“How precious is the Book divine, By inspiration giv'n!
Bright as a lamp its precepts shine, To guide my soul to heav'n.”**

Her family says that she began to read, study, and follow her book earnestly when she and her husband lost an infant child, Betty Jane. She recorded the date of her baby's birth and her death in the flyleaf of her book, and wrote these words beside those dates: “I sure hope I see you again, my sweet darling baby. Nothing can take her from Christ now. A rose bud waiting to bloom in heaven.”

THE WORD OF GOD

She continued to turn to her book when years later she lost an adult child, Patsy. Her daughter had been a diabetic and experienced kidney failure. When it was determined that only a kidney transplant would prolong her daughter's life, she gave one of her own kidneys to her. Patsy lived a few more years until she passed away at the age of 42. Her mother found solace in her book.

**"It sweetly cheers my drooping heart, In this dark vale of tears;
Light to my life it still imparts, And quells my rising fears."**

She loved to share her book with others. Late in her life, she befriended a 94-year-old woman who could not see very well. Since her friend couldn't see well, she read aloud from her book to her. She read aloud from her book to many others.

At the age of 80, she befriended another 80-year-old woman, Nora, who lived in the same apartment complex. She shared her book with her new friend. They studied the book together. Soon Nora accepted the book as the guide to her life.

**"This lamp through all the tedious night Of life, shall guide my way,
Till I behold the clearer light Of an eternal day."**

Her name was Thelma Clark. The book that she held dear was, as L.O. Sanderson entitled a song about the same book, "The Precious Book Divine," the Bible.

**"Holy Book divine! Precious treasure mine!
Lamp to my feet and a light to my way To guide me safely home." ***

Thelma Clark loved the Book because it is God's Word. It tells of the great love of God that sent His Son into the world to die on the cross so that Thelma and the rest of us can be saved from our sins and receive the gift of eternal life (John 3:16).

Thelma loved to tell others about how to receive the gifts of salvation and eternal life by the instructions given in the Book: we must place our faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from our sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38). Then, the Book should continue to be our guide: *"a lamp to our feet and a light to our path"* (see Psalm 119:105). In other words, the Book should be as precious to us as it was to Thelma Clark.

Won't **YOU** turn to the Book and follow its precepts? 

David A. Sargent serves as minister for the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, U.S.A.

*** In loving memory of Thelma Orene Thompson Clark, born November 14, 1927 and passed from this life to go to her eternal home on September 14, 2015. The lyrics quoted in this article are from "The Precious Book Divine" by L.O. Sanderson.**

Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

Jerry Bates

1. Paul thought that a Christian should do anything they wanted as long as it was not Scripturally wrong (6:12). True False
2. “The body is not for _____ immorality but for the _____, and the _____ for the body” (6:13).
3. God raised up Christ, and He will also _____ us up (6:14).
4. Our bodies are _____ of Christ (6:15).
5. By committing fornication, we become one _____ with a harlot (6:16).
6. What verse does Paul quote to provide evidence for the above statement (6:16)?
7. “He who is _____ to the Lord is one _____ with Him” (6:17).
8. By committing sexual immorality, against what does Paul declare that we sin (6:18)?
9. Paul declares that our body is the _____ of the Holy Spirit (6:19).
10. Paul further declares that we have been _____ at a price, which means that we are not our own (6:20).
11. Since our bodies belong to God, for what purpose should they be used (6:20)?

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

NOTE: In this section of Scripture, Paul was rebuking the Corinthians for their immoral behavior. Verses 12 & 13 seem to contain slogans that the Corinthians were using to justify their sinful behavior. However, our freedom in Christ does not in any way give us a license to sin (see also Romans 6:1-4). Like many people today, the Corinthians apparently thought any physical desire was proper and did not affect them spiritually, any more than the food they ate affected them spiritually. Thus, they thought that sexual immorality was nothing more than a purely fleshly desire and had no effect on one’s spiritual part.

The above reasoning is fallacious because our bodies are more than just physical repositories for our souls. Through the resurrection of Christ, our bodies will live eternally. Paul asserted that when we commit sexual immorality, we become one with a harlot, but we as Christians have already become one with the Lord. That means when we commit sexual immorality, we are also committing spiritual adultery.

We should realize that we have been bought by the blood of Jesus, just as a slave was bought at an ancient slave auction; therefore, we no longer belong to ourselves. We now belong to God, and our duty is to glorify God in our bodies and with our spirits. The Spirit of God is now dwelling in us, so how can we think about defiling God’s temple by committing sexual immorality. God will destroy those who defile His temple (1 Corinthians 3:17). Everything we have and all that we are belong to God; thus, may we always strive to glorify God.

The Lamb's Book of Life

David R. Pharr

As Jesus prepared for His final journey to Jerusalem, He chose seventy of His disciples to go ahead of Him to prepare for His coming. He warned that there would be opposition. They would be as *“lamb among wolves”*. They were given great power in the name of Christ to be able to cast out demons and to heal the sick (Luke 10:1ff).

It would be expected that all of Christ's followers would have great joy over success in ministry. Thus, when the seventy returned, they had exciting reports, saying, *“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”* Jesus knew the great works that had been done. Evil spirits had been unable to resist them. However, Jesus pointed them to something that is better even than working miracles. He said, *“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10:17-20).

The point to be learned is that there is something better even than being able to do mighty works. It is the assurance given to every faithful child of God that his name is in the Book of Life – that his name is written in heaven. Concerning heaven, the holy city, John wrote, *“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life”* (Revelation 21:27).

The fact that names are in the Book of Life tells us that God knows each of us intimately; He knows us by name. To emphasize His care for Moses, the Lord said, *“I know you by name”* (Exodus 33:17). Jesus spoke of Himself as *“the good Shepherd”*, saying, *“He calls his own sheep by name”* (John 10:3). Paul mentioned his fellow workers at Philippi, *“whose names are in the Book of Life”* (Philippians 4:3). In his letter to the church at Sardis, Christ assured them that *“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments... I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My*

SALVATION

Father and before His angels” (Revelation 3:34).

That God knows us by name also reminds us that salvation is not corporate, but personal. The Book of Life does not list the names of nations, families, or even churches, but individuals. Yes, saved people are members of Christ’s church, but salvation is received as a result of personal faith and obedience (1 Peter 1:22). One who is received into heaven will neither be there because his family name was **“written in heaven”** nor because he claimed membership in a church, but because of his personal, individual relationship with the Lord.

It needs to be emphasized that the Lamb’s Book of Life contains a precise and certain list. God knows exactly which names to write. **“The Lord knows those who are His”** (2 Timothy 2:19). There are no mistakes in the Book of Life, no names included that don’t belong and none missed that ought to be there. There are only two classes of responsible humanity: persons born again and persons not born again; persons in the church and persons in the world; persons forgiven of sin and persons living in sin; persons whose names are in the Book and persons whose names are not written there.

Names are recorded at birth – at the new birth, that is – when one is born again (John 3:17; 1 Peter 1:23ff; Galatians 3:26). We can know whether our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life in heaven by what we believe and what we follow in the Book we have on earth, the Bible.

It is also important to know that names written can be removed. Those who are faithful in overcoming sin will not have their names blotted out (Revelation 3:5). However, there is a dreadful warning that **“if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”** (Revelation 22:19). John wrote about his vision of the final judgment: **“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire”** (Revelation 20:11-15).✝

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SALVATION


THE BIG QUESTION:

WHICH?

Carroll Sites

Life is full of decisions. Some are big and some are small. Some are very important, and some are not so important. Some will impact one's life and some will impact a person's destiny. The way we answer the **BIG QUESTION – WHICH** – is by the decisions we make. Please consider the following carefully and make the right decisions.

- There are two ways of beginning the day - with prayer, or without it. You began in one of these two ways. Which?
- There are two ways of spending the Lord's Day – idly or devotionally. You spend the Lord's Day in one of these two ways. Which?
- There are two classes of people in the world – the saved and the unsaved. You belong to one of these classes. Which?
- There are two great masters of men in the universe – God and Satan. You are serving one of these two great masters. Which?
- There are two roads that lead through time and eternity – the broad road and the narrow road. You are walking on one of these two roads. Which?
- There are two deaths that people die; some ***“die In the Lord”*** while others ***“die in their sins”***. You will die one of these deaths. Which?
- There are two places to which people go – heaven or hell. You will go to one of these two places. Which?

Are there changes that need to be made in your life? Do you plan to make them? When? Do you plan to go to Heaven? The way you answer these questions will probably be determined by the way you answered **THE BIG QUESTION – WHICH!** The Bible speaks very plainly: ***“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”*** (Ecclesiastes 12:13). 

Carroll Sites is an elder and the preacher for the Lord's church in Higden, Arkansas, USA.

SALVATION

And There Shall Be No Night There

Ardron Hinton

This particular thought in the description of the “*new earth*” (Revelation 21:1) might be puzzling at first glance. Getting away from such things as sin, sickness, and death is easily seen as a blessing, but why eliminate night? Let’s think about it (Revelation 21:25):

The darkness of night is damaging to reality:

- It magnifies our problems.
- It exaggerates our fears.
- It dims and distorts our vision.

The darkness of night relates to troubling memories for most:

- It is associated with tiring, sleepless times.
- It is associated with the accenting of personal pain.
- It is associated with lengthened hours of vigil by bedsides.

The darkness of night has symbolic meaning for believers:

- It is used to illustrate a lack of knowledge.
- It is used to illustrate a life of stumbling and misdirection.
- It is used to illustrate the hidden realm of evil in the world.

The darkness of night does have some virtues that will no longer be needed:


- It signals the end of tiring days and brings the prospect of rest.
- It holds a glimmer of hope, once it passes, for a better tomorrow.
- It conceals much of the day’s ugliness under its star-studded cover.

SALVATION



We shall be freed from the circumstances surrounding night's troubling associations and dark symbolisms, and we shall have no need for its present benefits since we'll not have the problems. Yet, the most obvious reason for the absence of night in the "*new earth*" is not found in these inferences drawn from the text, but in a plain statement of it. This verse also tells us there is no sun in the "*new earth*", and it is the sun's relationship with a rotating earth that causes night and day. The power source will not be indirect, a God-created sun, but direct in a very real way – the Creator – the ultimate source of all power is there (Revelation 21:23).

So many find it difficult to see past creation to the Creator behind it. But

for the believer, the prospect of moving beyond the visible, but temporary, to the presently unseen, but eternal, is the most powerful anticipation in human minds. The Christian stands on the shores of the night's final associate, the realm of death, and looks beyond it to the perpetual radiance of God's presence. "*There shall be NO night there.*" 

Ardron Hinton (1929-2015) was a preacher of the Gospel and an educator who lived in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.



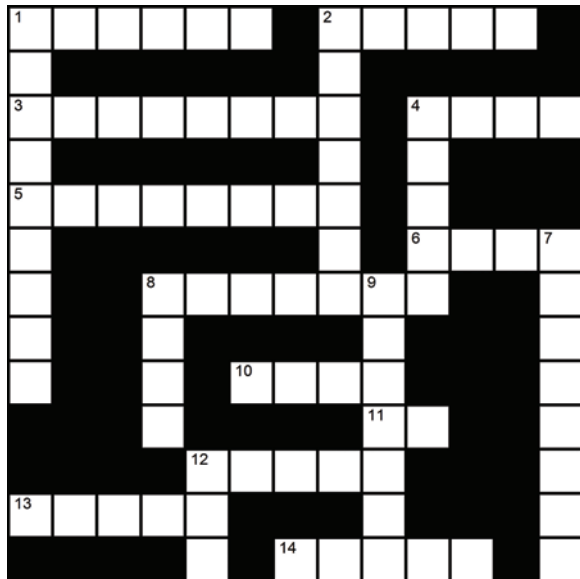
Bible Find

Louis Rushmore

BIBLE A'S

Across

- 1 Philistine city
- 2 first high priest
- 3 semi precious stone
- 4 first man
- 5 cast into furnace
- 6 seven churches of _____
- 8 father of the faithful
- 10 minor prophet
- 11 city defeated Israelites
- 12 heavenly messenger
- 13 sacrificial furniture
- 14 country east of Jordan River



- 4 husband of Sarai
- 7 Philistine city
- 8 New Testament history book
- 9 son of David
- 12 floating zoo

Down

- 1 precious ointment
- 2 called Christians first here

Causing Church Growth

Wayne Barrier

Church growth should be a top priority of every congregation. If the church is faithful to the Lord regarding the commission to spread the Gospel to every nation and to every person on earth, baptizing those who will obey (Matthew 28:18-20), then growth will result. A more detailed set of requirements for church growth is given in Ephesians 4:1-16. This passage ends with Verse 16 stating that something causes **“growth of the body”**. If we examine this passage, we can identify several things needed to cause growth.


First, several verses refer to necessary attitudes and character of church members that enable them to contribute to growth. These include lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, bearing one another in love, speaking the truth in love, and willingness to work. Later from Ephesians 4:31-32, Paul stated, **“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave you.”**

Next, Paul listed seven components of unity for the body of Christ. He stated in Ephesians 4:4-6, **“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”** Obviously there is much that must be understood through careful and comprehensive study of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16,17) before we can define each of these seven components of unity. We cannot achieve this requirement without serious, extensive Bible study. Many believers seldom study and have a very limited knowledge of the Bible. They can easily be **“carried about with every wind of doctrine in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”** (Ephesians 4:14).

Finally, we must all be workers, each doing his part to build up and grow the body (Ephesians 4:16). The church is to be taught by apostles and prophets. Their words (the Bible) are preserved for our instruction.

THE CHURCH

Today evangelists, elders, and teachers provide leadership and teaching that equips every Christian for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11,12). Every member has different abilities, strengths, talents, and capabilities. Each must develop a work of ministry based on one's particular attributes, opportunities, and characteristics. As we each do our part, working to serve the Lord's body, the church will be edified and will grow. What is your ministry?

The church is the most important body in this world. The church is the collection of those saved from sin and ready for eternity in Heaven. Church growth is difficult, but it is possible through application of guidance provided by the Bible. These simple verses contain a powerful guide for growth. 

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

Did You Know?

Only 643 manuscripts of the *Illiad* by Homer have survived to the present. In comparison, 5,366 manuscripts of the New Testament have survived. It is in the New Testament that one finds amply validated information about the church, the fulfillment of both Old Testament (Isaiah 2:2,3) and New Testament (Matthew 16:18) prophecies about its establishment (Joel 2:28-3:2; Acts 2:16-21, 47).



THE CHURCH

Epitaphs from the Catacombs

Bobby Dockery

On the outskirts of the city of Rome, there is a system of about 60 underground tunnels known as the “Catacombs”. The tunnels, which are about 5 feet wide by 8 feet high, branch off into a maze of 600 miles of subterranean galleries. Many of the Catacombs were hollowed out by Christians during the age of persecution and were used as places of refuge, worship, and burial when Roman opposition became especially intense.

The Catacombs tell a vivid story of the terrifying “fiery trial” that tested the faith of those early saints (1 Peter 4:12). It is estimated that from four to seven million Christian martyrs were buried in the Catacombs during the 1st and 2nd centuries. When the crypts of these early saints were opened, abundant evidence of the sadistic terrors they endured for Christ’s sake was seen in their savagely mutilated skeletons.

In the face of such affliction, we might have expected the faith of these early Christians to waver. Instead, the inscriptions taken from their tombs are a monument to their abiding confidence and hope in Christ. One epitaph reads, *“Here lies Marcia, put to rest in a dream of peace”*.



THE CHURCH

Another bears the simple testimony, *“Victorious in peace and in Christ”*. Still another proclaims, *“Being called away, he went in peace”*.

How could these early Christians bury their loved ones with such calm assurance? How could they speak so confidently of peace and hope while undergoing such unspeakable oppression? What was their secret? How did they develop such great faith?

They strengthened their faith by studying God’s Word. These Christians realized that *“faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). So they *“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”* (Acts 2:42). They took advantage of every opportunity to read and study the Scriptures. Their attitude toward the study of God’s Word is well-illustrated by the apostle Paul who sent for his *“books and parchments”* from prison so that he could continue to study the Old Testament Scriptures even on “death row” (2 Timothy 4:13).

They strengthened their faith by assembling together. They met together regularly for periods of worship and devotion. When persecution became so brutal that they could no longer meet publicly and from house to house, they assembled in the Catacombs. There, surrounded by darkness and death, they sang their triumphant hymns of faith and hope. Their determination not to forsake the assembling of themselves together was an important factor in the building of their faith.

They strengthened their faith by encouraging one another. Recognizing their need to *“exhort one another daily”* (Hebrews 3:13), they sought one another’s company so that they could *“stimulate one another to love and good deeds”* (Hebrews 10:25). They found the courage to live faithfully in the examples and exhortations of their brothers and sisters in Christ. The bond of fellowship drew them closer to one another and closer to Christ.

Theirs was the faith that overcame the world because they knew that *“greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). Does your own faith need a boost? Then learn from the faith that wrote the epitaphs of the Catacombs! †

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THE CHURCH

“Let Brotherly Love Continue” Hebrews 13:1

Cecil May Jr.

“*Brotherly love*” in this passage translates *philadelphia* (same as the name of the city), a combination of two words, one for a particular kind of love and one for brother.

Agape in the New Testament usually speaks of a love that does not require anything lovable in the ones being loved (Romans 5:8). It is a matter of willingness to do good for the ones loved rather than having sweet and fuzzy feelings toward them (Matthew 5:44,45).

Phile, on the other hand, denotes friendship, brotherly love. It exists because of something each partner in the relationship finds enjoyable or satisfying in the other. Outside of the religious realm, we find “golfing buddies”, and “fishing buddies”; during football season, “tailgating families” follow the same team. It might be chicken foot, Mexican train, rook, or junking together at yard sales. The point is, there are things people enjoy



THE CHURCH


doing, and they enjoy doing them together better than doing them alone. As a result of what they share in common, they love (*phile*) each other.

One preacher used to preach unity, saying, “Doctrine divides; love unites; so let’s just love one another and forget about doctrine”. One thing wrong with that is that it is just wrong.

Have you had the experience, as I have, of being in a large gathering, at a convention, say, and learning accidentally that someone else in the crowd was a fellow Christian, or as we would say, “a member of the church”? Do we not immediately feel an affinity for that person we had not felt before, and still did not feel for anyone else in the crowd? When we saw one another later, we sought each other out, to sit together or to eat together. What brought us together? I suggest it was brotherly love, *phile*, but what produced it? What could it have been but the common faith we share?

The love we have for our brothers and sisters in Christ — love that is not the same agape love we are to have for strangers and enemies, but a love that includes mutual affection and enjoyment of association — is based on the realization that we are one in Christ, that we gather on the Lord’s day around a common table, that we have in common **“one Lord, one faith, one baptism”**.

Once I was registered in a hotel where some World War II veterans of the 82nd Airborne were enjoying a reunion. The obvious love, mutual respect, and camaraderie those folks had for each other was a powerful model of the care and love Christians ought to have for one another as members of Christ’s body. However, absent any faith, any hearing, or knowing of the Gospel, any teaching (doctrine) about or from Christ, it is exactly what we would have if we “forget about doctrine and just love one another.” It isn’t Christianity. It isn’t the church. It isn’t the company of the redeemed.

Both love and doctrine are required, but it is the common faith and the doctrine we share that produces the special love as brothers and sisters that we enjoy. 

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THE CHURCH

One as Good as Another?

Bill Dillon




Two men were talking about the relative merits of the automobiles they had just purchased. With good humor, each was giving reasons why he thought his car was better than the other.

A mutual friend happened by, and they tried to enlist him in their friendly argument. “Which car would you rather have?” they asked.

Not wanting to be drawn into the dispute, he merely said, “Oh, I don’t know. I suppose one is as good as the other.”

“One as good as another?” Maybe regarding some things, but certainly not all things. Is one husband or wife as good as another? Is one house as good as another, or is one food as

good as another?

The Bible teaches that Jesus built His one church, purchasing it with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28). That is the church about which we need to be concerned. One is added to this church as he expresses his love for Jesus and obeys His commands. Where are you – in the Lord’s church, or in some other? 

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DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Calling on the Lord

Owen D. Olbricht

A favorite passage quoted by many preachers who tell people what to do to be saved is from Paul's quotation from Joel in the Book of Romans: ***"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*** (Romans 10:13). Peter also quoted this passage on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:21).

Meaning of "Called"

We use the word "call" with a number of different meanings. She calls (phones) me frequently. The umpire Joe calls balls and strikes at baseball games. The game was called because of rain. The man calls for help; he is making his appeal for help.

The Greek language has different words for "call". "Calls" (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13) is the translation of a compound word "upon" and "call", which means to surname someone (Matthew 10:2), to appeal to someone, like to Caesar (Acts 25:11), and to be called by a name (James 2:7). No clear context shows the meaning of call as "pray", as is taught by many who believe in salvation through prayer alone.

Jews on the Day of Pentecost

After Peter quoted Joel's statement, ***"whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*** (Acts 2:21), the people asked him what they needed to do (Acts 2:37). Peter did not refer to Joel's statement which he had quoted and tell them to pray in the name of the Lord. He rather told them to ***"Repent...and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"*** (Acts 2:38).

Evidently ***"call on the name of the Lord"*** did not mean "pray", or Peter would have told them to say "the sinner's prayer", a prayer nowhere found in the Bible. He rather told those who believed to ***"Repent...and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."***

Cornelius

An angel told the Gentile Cornelius to send to Joppa for Peter, ***"who will***

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

tell you words by which you and all of your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14). When Peter came to Cornelius’ home, he preached Jesus to them. When the Holy Spirit came on them, to show that the Gentiles could be saved in like manner as the Jews (Acts 15:7-9), Peter *“commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord”* (Acts 10:48), instead of telling them to pray.

Paul


When Jesus appeared to Paul, He told Paul, *“Arise and go into the city [Damascus], and you will be told what you must do”* (Acts 9:6). Paul went into the city where *he “neither ate nor drank”* for three days (Acts 9:9) and continued in prayer (Acts 9:11).

Jesus sent Ananias to Paul. When Ananias came to Paul, he did not tell him to continue in prayer. He rather told him, *“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). Paul’s sins were not washed away when he prayed three days but when he was baptized, making his appeal in the name of the Lord.

Our Appeal

When we are baptized, our forgiveness is in Jesus’ name, meaning our appeal for forgiveness is based on His authority. We are to do all in Jesus’ name, according to His authority (Colossians 3:17). The reason our appeal is in His name is *“For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

If we are baptized in Jesus’ name, by His authority, we will be baptized according to the instruction He gave His disciples when He sent them into all the world. He told them, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:19,20).

If our baptism is in Jesus’ name, by His authority, it will be in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 

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Does Truth Matter?

Bobby Key

In a city far away from where you live there once lived two men. Both men were very religious. Both were God-fearing. However, neighbors would confide to a stranger that both men were rather peculiar, and the popular religious leaders disliked them both.

They tried to trap the first one in his own words (Luke 11:54). They misjudged his motives (John 8:43; 10:20). That man was the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, they nailed Him to a cross and left Him to die.

The second fellow lived a few years later. He got off to a bad start when he switched religions. And such a pity! He had studied for the ministry under the best professors of the day. His former churchmen, more concerned with party politics than truth, called him their enemy

(Galatians 4:16). They tried more than once to kill him (Acts 23:12). They hounded him all over the Roman Empire. Some said he was beside himself (2 Corinthians 5:12). He was the apostle Paul.

Both Jesus and Paul would have had popular and promising careers had they only conformed. However, truth was more important to them than popularity. The person who is convinced of that today is sometimes lied about too. He is often slandered and misjudged. You see, truth is not always popular, but it is always truth. Truth remains truth even if the whole world rejects it! How important is truth to you?✝

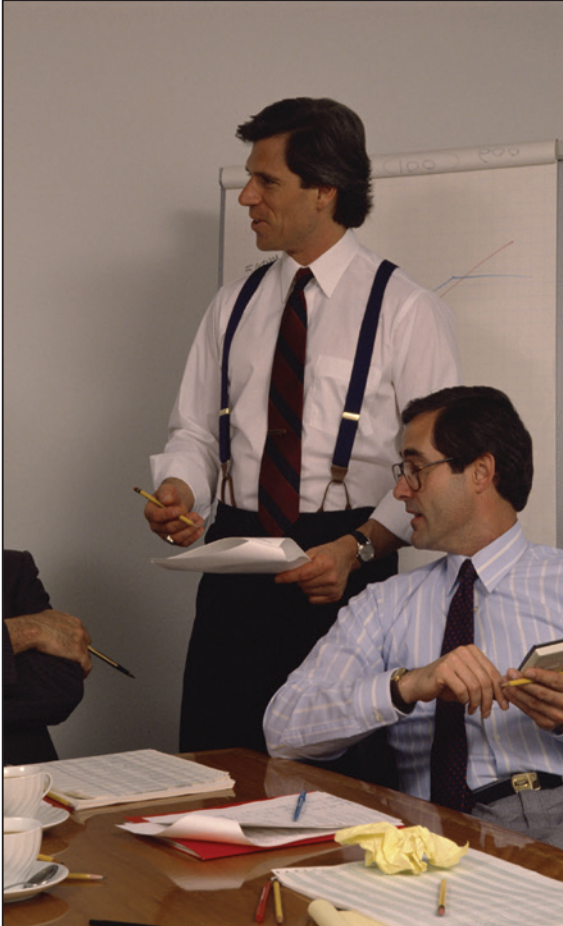
Bobby Key preached many years for the Lord's church in Miami, Oklahoma, USA.



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The Validity of the Restoration Plea

Jim Howard



The validity of the restoration plea is currently being called in question in many corners of our brotherhood. Most of us who grew up in the movement were schooled in the principle's viability by parents who accepted restorationism based on the simple premise that the God-given pattern for the church discernible in the New Testament had been lost, forgotten, or distorted. There is still much to be said for that understanding.

In today's pragmatically-minded world I think we need to be reminded of the practical values of the restoration plea. The plea is true not simply because it works, but restora-

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

tionism faithfully adhered to has proven itself an effective antidote to many of the most serious problems plaguing Christendom. Three illustrations of this truth:

1. **The restoration movement's emphasis on congregational independence has effectively undergirded our freedom in Christ.** Not only have local churches been guarded from wholesale apostasy, but each congregation in its uniqueness has its own personality and theological flavor. If a disciple is unhappy in one fellowship, chances are he or she can find another where he will be right at home.
2. **Restoration's attempt to recapture the spirit and forms of early Christian worship has proven conducive to individual spiritual growth.** Singing and making melody in our hearts (Ephesians 5:19) demand the involvement of our total selves more than does listening to a pipe organ or choir. Freewill giving (2 Corinthians 9:7) is far superior in teaching personal sacrifice than participation in a bake sale, car wash, or garage sale.

Restoration's imitation of the New Testament's picture of congregational leadership by a plurality of scripturally qualified elders has decided advantages over various manmade forms of government.

3. **Restoration's imitation of the New Testament's picture of congregational leadership by a plurality of scripturally qualified elders has decided advantages over various manmade forms of government.** One-man pastoral rule suffers from the absence of the combined wisdom of several minds and hearts. Rule by a far-removed synod, presbytery, or convention fosters resentment on the part of the independently-minded individual Christian.

Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. The restoration of New Testament Christianity still works. Let's be faithful to that principle. †

Jim Howard is an educator and preacher who lives in Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Unity and Doctrine

Ben Jones

Unity is desirable, and yet, it is often an elusive quality. Disagreements concerning the means to unity can ultimately render the end impossible to achieve. Unfortunately, doctrine itself has become a casualty, caught in the crossfire of increasingly polarized opponents. In the postmodern world, doctrine is often considered a secondary matter and an obstacle to religious unity.

The apostle Paul addressed the connection between doctrine and unity in the epistle to the Ephesians. The Book of Ephesians may be divided into two sections. Chapters 1-3 are focused on what Christ has done for the church, while chapters 4-6 are focused on what the church, in return, should do for Christ. In this context, Ephesians 4:1-6 is a sort of transitional passage linking the two sections. In Christ, men are called into the unity of the Spirit, a perfect fellowship fully realized in God's eternal plan of redemption. Christians are charged to walk worthy of this calling, ***“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”*** (Ephesians 4:3).

As indicated by this passage, true unity is the product of God, not man. In one sense, unity might be described as the proper response to God's grace, which both requires and results from walking in a manner worthy of a Christian. Such a walk involves two




DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

elements, the disposition of a servant and the doctrine of the Master.

First, Paul listed a series of Christ-like qualities that must be cultivated in the life of every disciple. These are humility, meekness, patience, tolerance and diligence. The Christian who must always have his way, constantly flies off the handle, holds a grudge or gives up at the first sign of trouble will be a disruption to the life of the church.

Second, Paul revealed a unique series of New Testament teachings that form the foundation of the Christian faith. These are the one God and Father, one Lord, one Spirit, one body, one faith, one baptism and one hope. The seven “ones” provide both a model and a means for the kind of unity required of God’s people. One, by definition, is distinctive and exclusive. It means one and only one. Christians can be kind and courteous toward those who hold different beliefs, but unity calls for both an agreeable attitude and a commitment to truth.

Take, for example, the matter of the one hope. In the New Testament, hope involves a confident expectation of obtaining something real. The Christian’s hope is eternal life in heaven, which is grounded in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus (1 Peter 1:3) and the immutability of God’s promises (Hebrews 6:18-20). Without these facts, however, hope is little more than a daydream. Now, imagine a church in which one man hoped to be reincarnated, another hoped for a millennial reign of Christ and a third hoped for all men to be saved apart from the Gospel. The sad truth is that such a church would be no worse off than one in which everyone believed the same false doctrine.

True unity is more than an effort to get along; it is a purposeful dedication to living the Christian life. The path to unity begins with a desire to know God and to obey His Word. When we agree that the Bible is right, we will eliminate the barriers to unity. 

Ben Jones preaches for the University Church of Christ in Morgantown, West Virginia, USA, and he is an instructor at the West Virginia School of Preaching.

**True unity is more than an effort
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dedication to living the Christian life.**

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

1 Timothy 2:9-15

9 ...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,

10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

11 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.

12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

15 Nevertheless she will be saved in child-bearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

Through mothering a family, the woman should grow in all of these traits that result in a mature Christ-like spirit and salvation.

The role of women in the home and in the church is being debated.

What do the Scriptures say?

Man and woman were created by God, and the book that supplies our directions was written by Him. What He says is clear, easily understood, and must be heard.

1. Women are commanded to dress modestly. Why? Because immodest dress, or flashy adornment worn to attract attention, creates lust in the hearts of men. A woman who wears low-cut dresses/shirts, or strapless clothes, exposing much of the upper part of her body, is causing men around her to sin. The same is true when her skirts are too short, her pants too tight, or she strips down to "outer clothing" that is no more than a renaming of underwear. A Christian woman must not cause sin.

2. In worship assemblies, women are not given authority by God to take public leadership roles over men. Some say this was only a first century rule, and that the culture has changed. But **God's rule is not based on culture.** From *creation*, He formed man and woman as two parts of a whole unit, equipping each one to best fill the role He intended. **Man is the head of the house, responsible for the family; woman is by his side, as his completion.** Women are more trusting, more easily deceived. Look at Scripture: **How many apostles, prophets, and leaders in God's public work were women?**

Hopeless? Not So Fast

Steve Higginbotham

Harrison Okene from Nigeria unexpectedly found himself in a hopeless situation. He found himself on the bottom of the ocean, in a small air-pocket in his overturned tugboat, sunk by a rogue wave. Harrison was in total darkness, disoriented, all alone, and dressed only in boxer shorts in freezing temperatures. For 60 hours, he fumbled in total darkness, trembled due to the cold, listened while fish were consuming the bodies of his fellow crewmen, and waited for his oxygen supply to run out.

Then, when his oxygen supply was just about gone, an amazing thing happened. A rescue diver appeared. Harrison was given oxygen, led to a decompression chamber, and gradually raised to the surface, snatched from the jaws of death. What seemed like a hopeless situation only proved to be the setting for his salvation. Now Harrison lives to tell others of how he was saved.

Have you ever felt spiritually hopeless? Have you ever felt that you were beyond the reach of God's saving grace? Then, let me remind you of this. If a drunken, incestuous father (Lot), a lying harlot (Rahab), a murderous adulterer (David), and a persecutor of the church (Saul/Paul) can be forgiven and held up as examples of great men and women of faith, then there's hope for you, too!

Try to imagine the joy and relief Harrison Okene must have experienced when he reached out and touched his rescuers hand! Hope from hopelessness! Likewise, imagine the joy and relief that are experienced by the sinner who reaches out and takes hold of the Savior's hand! Hope from hopelessness!

To those of you who have been saved by God and now have life, tell others about it! Tell how God rescued you from a hopeless situation and gave you hope! ***"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"*** (Psalm 107:2). ✝

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

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

He Kept Preaching the Gospel

Wayne Brewer

One of the most interesting persons in the New Testament was Philip, a man of good reputation among the members of the church, and who was selected to “*serve tables*” in Jerusalem (Acts 6:2,5). Philip proved to be a great servant of the Lord and the church as he was one who made sure that the widows were not neglected concerning their needs (Acts 6:1). This was an important work for at least two reasons: first, in order that the apostles might continue their work of preaching the Gospel (Acts 6:2), and second, because “*pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is to visit orphans and widows in their trouble...*” (James 1:27).




Sometime later, “*a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered...*” (Acts 8:1), and one of those who left the city was Philip. Luke informs us, “*Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word, and then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them*” (Acts 8:5). Philip is inter-

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

esting because he went to the people who were most hated and despised by the Jews, the Samaritans. The results, though, were very encouraging, because ***“when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized”*** (Acts 8:12). Philip went to the last place that many Jews would have gone, and the power of the Gospel was seen (Romans 1:16; 10:17).

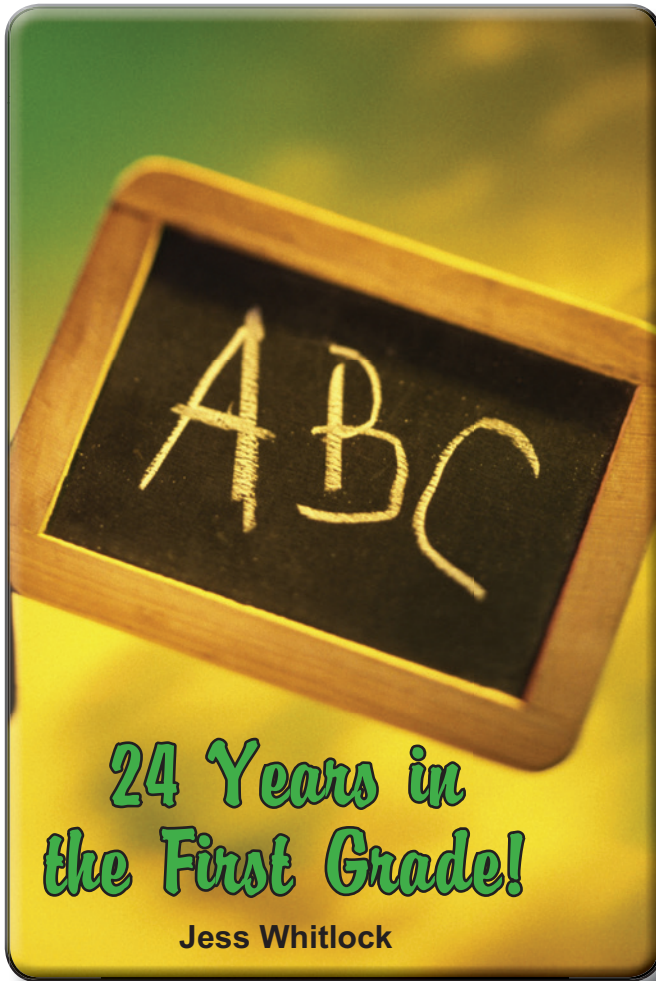
What did Philip and those who were scattered preach? They preached “the word”, “Christ”, “the kingdom of God”, and “the name of Jesus Christ”, which indicates a broad array of topics. Sometime later, Philip met a man from Ethiopia, ***“and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him”*** (Acts 8:35). It should be observed that the Christians of the first century, like Philip, preached the Word of God without preaching their human traditions. The intense persecution in Jerusalem and other places may have driven Philip and many others from the city, but it did not stop them from preaching and teaching the Gospel. In fact, the persecution provided new opportunities for them to preach the Word.

Philip preached the Gospel to the Ethiopian, the man obeyed the Gospel (Acts 8:38), and then these words are written about Philip: ***“he preached in all the cities...”*** (Acts 8:40). The tense of the verb *“preached”* could be literally translated *“kept on preaching”*. In spite of the many obstacles that Philip faced, he kept on preaching the Gospel of Christ and the good news of the kingdom of God. Those words, *“kept on preaching”*, should characterize every teacher and preacher of God’s Word today. We must keep on teaching and preaching when people believe and when they do not believe. We must keep on teaching and preaching when people respond or do not respond. We must keep on teaching and preaching whether the message is popular or unpopular. We must do as Philip and keep on preaching, because the Gospel ***“is the power of God to salvation...”*** (Romans 1:16). 

Wayne Brewer works with the Lord’s church in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

The intense persecution in Jerusalem and other places may have driven Philip and many others from the city, but it did not stop them from preaching and teaching the Gospel.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



**24 Years in
the First Grade!**

Jess Whitlock

A bulletin crossed my desk years ago. It contained this clip ~ “Twenty four years in the First Grade. That is how long it would take to pass if public schools met only as often as Sunday School, and *if no Bible classes were missed!*”

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

The Word of God, according to a 2012 survey (Rankin), revealed that only 19% of “churchgoers” read the Bible daily. As many as 25% stated they read the Bible a few times each week. A staggering 14% indicated they read the Bible once a week. Then 22% confessed to reading the Word of God “once a month or a few times each month.”

Several months ago, brother Jack Wall, brother Dale Vann, and I had a long discussion about our Bible class curriculum. So much of “our literature” has to be proofed to make sure it is scriptural, and so much of the instruction has to be “weeded out,” and then the price of ready-made material is atrocious. We decided to write our own material. In asking around, I contacted Gary Summers, who responded by saying, “We’ve done that!”

The elders looked over that material, ordered it, and we are now implementing Bible material that covers the Bible in 5½ years! This means our very young kids could cover the Old and New Testaments twice before High School graduation.

The late brother Eldred Stevens once observed that if a person spent 20 minutes a day on any given subject for a period of 20 years, that at that time, he would be considered an “authority” in that field. The Bible furnishes us completely unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the Bible is the Truth that can set us free (John 8:32; 17:17), the Word of the Lord is pure and righteous (Psalm 119:140; Proverbs 30:5,6). Let us never forget the value of God’s Word and that His Word will be the final standard of judgment for all mankind (John 12:48).

By the way, the Supreme Court is not the final authority! That august body will one day stand before the real *Supreme Court!*

Every parent and grandparent should think seriously about our opening statement! How do your children (grandchildren) do in attending Bible classes? If they only make it to about half of those classes, that would mean it would require **48 years to finish the First Grade!** What if public schools met only as often as our Bible classes? Do you realize that the majority of youth in this nation would not live long enough to enter Junior High School? **Let’s get serious about studying the Bible!** ✝

How Do You Measure Up?

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.

“Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’

“For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren...

Deuteronomy 4:2-9





What Can You Do on Saturday to Make Sunday More Worshipful?

J. Randal Matheny

A headline for an article on a popular success and technology website offers, “What You Can Do on Sunday to Make Monday More Manageable.” It’s not strange that people obsessed with professional development and financial success constantly think about how to get ahead.

So why don’t Christians think more about spiritual success, theirs and their neighbor’s? What can we do on Saturday to make Sunday more worshipful, spiritual, and edifying? Here are seven suggestions to consider doing on Saturday to get ready for Sunday.

1. Go to bed early on Saturday night. Get plenty of rest. Sleepiness is not conducive to spirituality. Don’t tire yourself so much the day before the Lord’s Day that you can’t worship properly.
2. Set yourself up for success. Ask what truths you’ll hear that will make a difference in your life in Christ and service to God.
3. Seek out someone who is spiritually needy. Ask the Lord to show you a person you can befriend.
4. Invite someone to go with you to the assembly. Explain ahead of


WORSHIP

time what to expect. Tell what advantages accrue to participation.

5. Read your Bible and pray on Saturday – and the day before – and the day before that. People who seek God during the week can best praise him on Sunday.

6. Leave self at the door before entering the building, auditorium, or room where the church meets. Put God – His character, His works, His will, His purpose, His goodness – squarely in the center of your focus.

7. Edify and be edified. Give and learn to receive. Show yourself friendly, and gain friends. Draw near to the Lord, and He will draw near to you. Learn and practice the principle of reciprocity.


Smart business people know that success doesn't happen by chance. Doing a great job requires preparation. Rarely do worship and adoration of the Almighty just happen. So, Saturday can be a great moment to get ready for the Lord's Day. 

J. Randal Matheny is a Christian publisher and editor in Brazil.

New Testament Worship

In no particular order, New Testament worship consists of five distinct activities, which are primarily directed toward our Heavenly Father. Careful consideration of the New Testament reveals the following acts of worship.

- **Teaching or Preaching (Acts 20:7)**
- **The Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)**
- **The Contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)**
- **Singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16,17)**
- **Prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15)**

More or less than this on the Lord's Day is not authorized by God in the Gospel of Christ. 

WORSHIP


Pray Without Ceasing

Dalton Key

We wear ourselves weary with worry, we line our stomachs with stress-caused ulcers, and we send ourselves to an early, fretful grave because we have lost sight of the purpose and power of prayer. ***“Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you”*** is still a statement of truth (1 Peter 5:7). Convinced that God is, that He is powerful, and that He cares for us, we must return to the avenue of prayer, taking the wonderful example of the Bible’s prayerful characters to heart. We must learn to heed Paul’s admonition to ***“Pray without ceasing”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Observe the history of the ages! Great men of God have always been great men of prayer. Isaac prayed in a field (Genesis 24:63), Jacob, by a brook (Genesis 32:22-24), Jeremiah from a dungeon (Lamentations 3:55), Daniel from a den of lions (Daniel 6), Jonah from a fish’s belly (Jonah 2:1), Peter on a housetop (Acts 10:9), and the record shows that the apostle Paul, a mighty man of prayer, petitioned God from a prison cell on more than one occasion.

And what of our Savior? Was He not, while in the flesh, a man of prayer? Did He not spend many long hours, yea, entire sleepless nights, engrossed in earnest supplication? So impressed were His disciples by our Lord’s prayer life, that on one occasion, when He had finished praying, one of His followers asked, ***“Lord, teach us to pray”*** (Luke 11:1). His prayer recorded in John 17, the prayer that should rightly be termed “the Lord’s Prayer,” reveals the depth and richness of His prayer life.

These all, ***“of whom the world was not worthy,”*** along with countless others not here mentioned, recognized, and realized an important biblical principle that many of us have foolishly and faithlessly laid aside. These all believed, firmly believed, that ***“the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”*** (James 5:16). 

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

WORSHIP

On Expressing Thanks at the Lord's Table

Maxie B. Boren

Throughout the brotherhood, I sincerely believe there is a great need for more thoughtful and meaningful expressions of thanks as assemblies of worship are being led in prayer before partaking of the emblems representing the body and the blood of Jesus. It is spiritually deflating if such prayers are not scriptural and meaningful, and if they do not convey depth of understanding as to the significance of the great sacrifice Jesus made for us. To illustrate, a brother once prayed, "Thank you, God, for this bread and bless it to the nourishment of our bodies." Obviously, either he was nervous and did not even realize what he was saying, or else he knew nothing of what the Lord's Supper is all about. Either way, it detracted a great deal from the spiritual mood of the moment.

Prayers are frequently offered that never thank God for that for which we should be thankful as we partake of the Lord's Supper. Some brothers in their prayers at the Lord's Table thank God for almost everything imaginable while never even making reference to the sacrifice of Christ. This is deeply regretful and lays bare a very real problem in so many places. **How can we improve in this very important part of worship?**

First of all, brethren should read the accounts directly pertaining to the memorial feast of Christ that is to



WORSHIP

be observed on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and spend some quiet time in prayerful reflection upon them (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Secondly, other related passages should be considered with equal care, such as Romans 5:6-11; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24, 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Galatians 1:3-4, 2:20; 6:14; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:4-9; Philippians 3:7-12; Colossians 1:12-23; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:8b-10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Hebrews 2:9-18; 7:26-27; 9:11-28, 10:10,12; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 2:21-25; 1 John 4:9,10 and Revelation 7:9,14.

It would be good to read and think about the message of such songs as, *“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”*, *“Oh the Depths and the Riches”*, and *“Nailed to the Cross”*. Having read and pondered the above-mentioned Scriptures and songs, a brother with the responsibility of leading a prayer at the Lord’s table should then give careful thought as to what would be an appropriately-worded prayer. The prayer should be prayed sincerely and earnestly from the deep recesses of one’s heart, expressing profound gratitude for God’s love and mercy as manifested in Jesus Christ and His willingness to give Himself on the cross in our stead.

Please consider three last observations:

(1) Often, prayers are worded, thanking God for the “bread” and the “fruit of the vine” without even mentioning the body and blood of Jesus. Brethren, it is not the literal bread, per se, nor the literal grape juice, per se, for which we are primarily thankful, but the body and the blood of Jesus! Only in a secondary sense are we thankful for the emblems themselves. It is what the emblems represent for which we should be thankful! Why not word our prayers with the emphasis where it belongs?

(2) Every public prayer should be worded loudly enough and distinctly enough so people can hear and understand. Brethren should never “mutter through” a public prayer.

(3) Lastly, please brethren, remember, it is God the Father to whom we are praying, and it was Jesus His beloved Son who died on the cross. It is fallacious to thank the Father for His body given and His blood shed. God is a spirit (John 4:23,24) and a spirit does not have flesh and bones

WORSHIP

(Luke 24:39). It was Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, who became incarnate (John 1:1-4, 14; 3:16-17) and endured the suffering of the cross for us (Philippians 2:5-11). It was, therefore, the body and the blood of Jesus that was sacrificed at Calvary. Although the Godhead is “*one*”, the Bible makes a very clear distinction between the Father in heaven and the Son that came to earth as Savior, and we need to be very careful to note that truth. To do otherwise is to err, and to misteach others even as we pray. †

Maxie B. Boren (1932–2016) was a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

Have You Prayed?

Chad Ezelle

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

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



WORSHIP

The Words Are All that Matter?

Andy Robison

In regard to congregational singing, oft is offered the quip, “Well, the words are all that matter, anyway.” This is a comfort to tone-deaf worshipers, but, the secular, well-intentioned proverb may be employed too far.

If the words were, indeed, all that mattered, perhaps God would have said something like, “Recite to one another in poems, rhymes and spiritual verse.” Could it be that the musical setting (a cappella) has more importance than often acknowledged?

Music is an emotional thing. Composers of purely instrumental music (from symphonies and operas to punk rock and country) work to construct the chord progression, melodies and harmonies to create a mood, often mirroring some occasion or historic event. A fanfare for Olympic Games is an upbeat call to competition and potential triumph – a memorable melodic line punctuated with quick punches of harmonic brass. A mournful dirge, by contrast, might employ low strings in slow, solemn movements.

In authorized a cappella singing for congregations, the music generally fits the words. “Nearer My God, to Thee” would never be set to a driving rhythm (as in “Ring Out the Message”). The thrill of “The New Song” is best with its buoyant beat and majestic chorus; it wouldn’t work with a contemplative chant-like, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” feel. The musical composers seek to amplify the impact of the wording.

Singing might be viewed as the divinely authorized outlet for human emotion. Many sectarian groups take emotionalism to unscriptural levels – mistaking shaking and rolling, hand-waving and moaning for being Spirit-filled. An orderly God (1 Corinthians 14:40) actually thought this through, and He gave an avenue for us to express how we feel toward Him (and even others) at particular moments. This is why some of the deepest

WORSHIP


emotions of grief, sorrow, bitterness, joy, victory and praise appealing to all generations are found in the book of... you guessed it... Psalms. They were originally sung. Further, perhaps this is one reason (it is certainly at least a result) that singing was chosen as the authorized use of music in worship. Instrumental music can make one feel a certain way without an intellectual reason as to why. With singing, the intellect is employed first and foremost. One knows he is surveying the scene of the wondrous cross. Then, the music helps amplify the thought.

It behooves brethren, then, to work on singing to the best of their abilities. God bless the monotone worshiper who “lets ‘er fly” upon the song leader’s cue. Yet, those who excuse themselves flippantly from ever trying to un-

derstand pitch, tone, phrasing, harmony and all the things that make singing more meaningful are missing a great opportunity in the service of God. In order to **“consider one another”** (Hebrews 10:24-25) in the worship setting, shouldn’t we all aim



at improvement in every aspect of worship – from attention in study to expression in song?

Words matter. Without the words, there wouldn’t be any teaching or admonishing. However, remember that without the music (a cappella), there wouldn’t be any singing or song. 

Andy Robison is the Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching (WWW.WVSP.COM). He is a recipient of a B.A. from Harding (where he received the L.O. Sanderson scholarship for hymn-writers), with a double major in Bible and Vocal Music. He has written a number of songs and helped produce several CDs of a cappella singing to benefit West Virginia Christian Youth Camp, where he serves on the Board of Directors. He is the Editor of the songbooks *Teaching & Admonishing* and *100 Songs to the Glory of God*. Many of his original songs can be accessed at WWW.churchofchrist-songs.COM. He and his wife Marsha have two children, Hannah and Andrew.

PROVERBS 17:22



An old Vermonter sat long and silently on his porch one spring evening with his wife of 50 years. He suddenly blurted, “Sometimes when I think what you have meant to me all these years, it’s all I can do to keep from telling you.”



A police recruit was asked during the exam, “What would you do if you had to arrest your own mother?”

He replied, “Call for backup!”



A neighbor lady told about an experience she had had recently. She said, “I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor’s permission to join a fitness club and start exercising.

I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted,

gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotard on, the class was over...”



Four women got into a terrible argument. After much yelling, screaming, and pulling of hair, one of them called out, “I’m on my way to the sheriff’s office to report you.”

The other three wanted to get there first. The result was that all four rushed into the sheriff’s office, each trying to be first to relate her complaints. Charges and counter-charges filled the air.

Finally the sheriff called for order. When quiet had been restored, he showed the wisdom of Solomon when he announced, “All right, ladies, I’ll hear one at a time. The oldest can speak first.”

Case closed!



Weeping wife: “John, you’ve forgotten my birthday again.”

Quick-thinking husband: “But darling, how do you expect me to remember when you never look a day older?”

PROVERBS 17:22



Wow! I had a near-death experience that has changed me forever. The other day I went horseback riding. Everything was going fine until the horse started bouncing out of control. I tried with all my might to hang on, but was thrown off.

Just when things could not possibly get worse, my foot got caught up in the stirrup. When this happened, I fell headfirst to the ground. My head continued to bounce harder and harder, and the horse did not stop or even slow down.

Just as I was giving up hope and losing consciousness, the Wal-Mart manager came out and unplugged it.



My wise friend Leon gave some foolproof advice to help me get out of bed each morning. Simply place a set mouse trap on top of the alarm clock. It helps to prevent you from rolling over and going back to sleep after you hit the snooze button.



We got lucky when we heard the old Piedmont Hotel in Atlanta was getting a face-lift and its beautiful maple doors became available for

sale as salvage items. We bought several and had them installed in our 19th-century home.

Showing a friend around the house, I pointed out, “You know, these doors are from the Piedmont Hotel.”

My friend raised an eyebrow and said, “Most people just take the towels.”



A lawyer phoned the governor’s mansion shortly after midnight. “I need to talk to the governor—it’s an emergency!” exclaimed the lawyer.

After some cajoling, the governor’s assistant agreed to wake him up. “So, what is it that’s so important that it can’t wait until morning?” grumbled the governor.

“Judge Cooper just died, and I want to take his place,” begged the lawyer.

“Well, it’s fine with me if it’s OK with the funeral home,” replied the governor.



If you’re choking on an ice cube, simply pour a cup of boiling water down your throat. The blockage will instantly remove itself.

Still Small Voice

Rani Timoti




They strike you at the heart. Your mind twists, turns, and knows it has to transform. You're challenged, provoked, and go through thought-provoking anguish. Your circumstances abound with temptations, moral dilemmas, and painful choices. You could avoid, evade, quit, or give up, but they would still be there lurking and demanding to be dealt with.

Conscience questions from the Bible are needed. They remind you who God is and who you are! What is your relationship with God like? Here are just a few Scriptures to reflect upon.

Genesis 4:7 – God spoke to Cain regarding the choice to be envious, bitter, and commit murder. *“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”*

Genesis 39:9 – *“He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”* This was Joseph’s response to Potiphar’s wife regarding the temptation towards adultery.

Genesis 50:20 – Joseph displayed a forgiving spirit toward his brothers. *“But Joseph said to them, do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”*

Esther 4:14 – Mordecai spoke to his niece Esther in a test of faith. *“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* 

Rani Timoti lives in Auckland, New Zealand, and she is a ladies’ class teacher and writer.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING



Christian Example

Neil Richey


My Lord said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). The best I can tell, there’s no limitation to this.

In other words, shining forth a good example is not restricted to the church building, to Sunday service, or when just around church folks. Truth be told, where it’s most important to let our lights shine is at home, on the job, at school, and even on social media sites. True Christianity radiates from within and is on display everywhere and all the time.

Question: Do people know that you’re a Christian? They shouldn’t have to ask you. They should be able to witness it for themselves.

William Barclay wrote, “Our Christianity should make a difference in the way we order a meal from a waitress or treat the shop assistant behind the counter. Christianity should make a difference in the conscientiousness of our work, and in the courtesy with which we serve the public, and in the consideration with which we live within our own homes.”

Christianity is a full-time job. It’s not a pastime practiced only on Sundays. It demands our best behavior every day.


George Bailey (not the “It’s a Wonderful Life” guy) said, “Nothing is more contagious than an example.” What kind of example are you setting? It’s contagious. What are folks picking up from you? 

Neil Richey preaches for the Piedmont Road church of Christ in Marietta, Georgia, USA.

What Makes a Servant of God?

Bob Plunket

1. **Most of the time they start with great parents.** Elkanah and Hannah were the parents of Samuel. She was barren and could not have a child. She prayed constantly that the Lord would give her a son. She said, *“If you will give me a son, I will devote him to you.”* One day she conceived and later had a son. She kept her word. When she had weaned him, she took him to the house of God and turned him over to Eli to teach and train him. She loved Samuel deeply and made him a little coat and brought it to him. If our children are to love and serve God, we must take them to His house often and early.
2. **He answers God’s call.** Later when God called Samuel, he said, *“Speak, Lord, thy servant is listening.”* Too many today say, “Listen, Lord, your servant is speaking.”
3. **Faithful to the truth of God.** Samuel had to tell old Eli, the one he loved and the one who raised him, that God was going to remove him and his sons because his sons were evil. It takes courage to tell the people that we love things they do not want to hear. Later he would tell the nation, *“If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts then rid yourselves of the foreign gods.”* In Chapter 13 he had to rebuke the new king of Israel.
4. **A man who can anoint and kiss his replacement.** Samuel was hurt because he thought Israel had rejected him, but God told him, *“They have rejected me, not you.”* A great servant of God realized that the work of God is bigger than any one man, and he loves God’s cause better than himself.
5. **A man who knows when and how to say goodbye.** In Chapter 12, Samuel said, *“I am old and gray. Whose ox or donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? The people answered, ‘No one.’”* He was faithful.

Nowhere does it say he was tall, handsome, eloquent, strong, or clever, but rather that he was faithful and honest. We can all be that. Consider carefully 1 Samuel chapters 1-13. 

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

"MY DADDY, THE PREACHER"

Mark N. Posey



The passage, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,”* calls to us every day of our lives. Preaching the Gospel of Jesus is the most noble of professions and the one I have chosen to “profess” for the rest of my days upon this earth.

Many people have impacted my life; there have been those who inspired me, encouraged me, and loved me. There is, however, no other like my father, my daddy, the preacher! My father loves nothing more than “preaching the gospel to every creature”. Preaching was lived before my eyes every day of my childhood; what I heard in

the pulpit is what I saw at home.

In this world of hypocrisy, we need people, preachers of the Gospel, who practice what they preach. I saw in my daddy, very early in life, what I wanted to become. The beautiful part is that he never changed or compromised what he preached or what he lived, and I never changed what I wanted to become. As long as I can remember, all that I ever wanted


DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

to do with my life was preach the Gospel; I wanted to be like my daddy.

The rewards of preaching are abundant! A preacher works with the best people, proclaims the greatest message, and serves the most awesome God. The example that we set forth is one that many will see. The example I saw of a preacher, his attitude, his actions, and his thoughts reflected only goodness and purity. I saw a life of servitude, giving and forgiving, and of praise in a man who was strong and mighty.

In the marriage vows that my wife and I exchanged, my father said, “May your marriage be good, happy, and the example of a Christian marriage so others may see it and want to be married.” Young men all over the world will be drawn to the profession of preaching **if** they have good role models to look up to and admire. What an awesome responsibility lies in our words, lives, and examples!

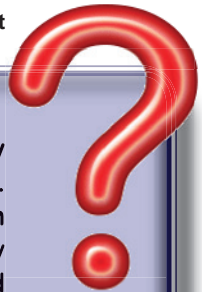
As my son Joshua Posey is now a full-time preacher, I know beyond all doubt that my example in word and deed is being watched every day. I know that if I live a life as my daddy did, one in which the preacher in the pulpit and the preacher at home agree, then I will set before him an example that is complimentary to the preaching profession and a glory to God.

May God bless all fathers as you live the life of goodness and purity to raise preachers of tomorrow. Dad, thanks for showing me that the job of a preacher is the best job in the world. 

Mark N. Posey is the preacher for the Austinville church of Christ in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

Did You Know?

The words of God, the Bible, were written by about 40 men over approximately 1,600 years. These men were very different, from fishermen to kings, from relatively uneducated to highly educated scribes. Yet, the Bible is one unified document with no errors. Only God could make that possible! Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17 and 2 Peter 1:20,21.



I Didn't Do Enough!

Dayton Keese

Several years ago I read an article about Oskar Schindler, a former member of the Nazi party. It is a heart-wrenching story of Schindler's transition from a profiteering, lust-living man to a person with a passion for the perishing. At just the right moment, a little, wise Jew, Itzhak Stern, dropped a *seed thought* into the heart of Schindler that turned him from wine, women, and song to a devout worker, forming a list that saved some 6,000 Jews from the holocaust. These 6000 became known as *Schindletjuden* "Schindler's Jews".

He transferred Jews to work in his factory, making pots and pans. Over 1,000 Jews were transported from Poland to Czechoslovakia where he put them to work in a concentration camp making dummy artillery shells. He used his own money to buy these people's lives.



Because of Schindler's list and work, the Jews declared him to be "a Righteous Person" in 1961. After his death, he was buried in Israel in 1974.

The story stirs one's soul when an additional thought is given; while the Jews considered him a hero, he was never comforted! Why? Note the moment when World War II ended. Schindler and his wife had to flee. As he moved to his car, making his departure, he thought of the list, and cried, "I didn't do enough! This car... ten people right there!" He tore the Nazi pin from his suit lapel. "This gold pin... two people! One more person!" With a haunting agony, he fell to his knees and cried, "One more person! I could have got one more person! And I didn't!"


DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

At that miserable moment Schindler would have gladly given up all his gold, former prestige, and power to have joined hands with Paul to say, ***“I am innocent of the blood of all men”*** (Acts 20:26).

Dear Reader, how many of us may need to say with Oskar Schindler, “I didn’t do enough”? I am reminded of the sobering song by B.B. Edmisston:

***“Someone is needing your help,
Someone is sad and lone;
Someone is weary and weak
Someone is almost gone.***

***Drifting away, dying today;
Someone, ‘tis someone you love;
Why do you wait? -ere ‘tis too late,
Point them to heav’n above.”***

A good, saving deed done today will mean a more blest and happier tomorrow (John 13:17). 


Dayton Keese is an elder in the Lord’s church in Choctaw, Oklahoma, USA.

Where Is My Mission? Louis Rushmore

Where is my mission? As a Christian, where is my mission (Matthew 5:16)? Is it afar somewhere (Mark 16:15,16), or is it close by as well (Luke 10:25-37)? As a father, where is my mission (Ephesians 6:4)? As a husband, where is my mission (Ephesians 5:25)? As an evangelist, where is my mission (Acts 20:27)?

As important of a consideration, **what is my mission?** What is my mission as a Christian (Ephesians 5:8)? What is my mission as a father (Deuteronomy 6:7)? What is my mission as a husband (1 Peter 3:7)? What is my mission as an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:2)?

Furthermore, **for Whom am I a missionary** (Colossians 3:24)? Is it me I am to please (Galatians 1:10), or is there someone else whose favor I desire (John 12:26)?

Surely, there is no nobler cause than that of Jesus Christ our Lord (2 Corinthians 12:10)! **One’s mission and with whom that mission unfolds revolves around Jesus Christ** (2 Corinthians 4:5). 

Trial-Size Marriage?

Danny Boggs

I am always honored by invitations to perform wedding ceremonies. I love assisting people to make solemn commitments to God and to each other, and thereby find the joy and security for which He designed the marriage relationship. Sometimes, though, my commitment to helping bring about only the kind of marriages that the Bible authorizes puts me in a hard spot.

Once a dear woman who had already been married once, already had a child from that marriage, and had already been living together for several years off and on with another man, now wanted to marry him. She called me unexpectedly and asked me to be the man in the middle of the ceremony. I could not. The circumstances surrounding her divorce were questionable. She had chosen a mate very poorly the first time, and everyone who knew him knew it before that decision was made. She still had not learned to choose more wisely.

She had been abused in a number of ways by the man she now wanted to make her husband, and the periods when they were not living together were due to the fact that he had kicked her out. She was not a Christian. I shared my biblical concerns. I explained from the Bible that God's plan for matrimony is one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:4-6). I assumed, as is usually the case, that since they were living together they were also engaged in a sexual relationship, a gift God reserves for those who are married with His biblical authorization. I was unaware that she was pregnant when she called me. She showed no interest in my offer to help her have a right relationship with the Lord. Later, I appealed to her with secular information that only corroborates the Bible's spiritual teaching.

I think everyone ought to keep these findings on file as reminders to themselves or in order to help others. While the 2000 census found that people living with members of the opposite sex without being married are numerous (4,571,992 are doing it in the USA), studies have found that the beliefs common to many cohabiting couples are erroneous. In an article titled, "*Mom, I Want to Live with My Boyfriend*" (*Reader's Digest* 1994, 77-


THE CHRISTIAN HOME

80), K.C. Scott shared these discoveries gleaned from a number of studies:

- Estimates are that no more than 50 percent of couples who live together will ever tie the knot. In one study, only 19 percent of men in such relationships did.
- If live-in couples do marry, they run a much higher risk of divorce. In a report by *The National Marriage Project* at Rutgers University in 2002, I read that divorce is 46% more likely when couples first live together. Surely we can see that living together is not good training for marriage.
- Breaking up can hurt as much as divorce.
- Even if they do marry, they are usually less happy.
- Cohabiting can lead to instability, including violence.
- Living together breeds the problems of marriage without the rewards.
- Living together can kill romance.

In some situations, living together without being married simply indicates ignorance of God's plan, and quick repentance upon hearing the truth of the matter evidences the good hearts of the uninformed; by God's grace such couples can thrive in marriage. In most cases, living together without being married reflects that one's own convenience and pleasure are priorities, and God's plan for marriage is not highly prized. The commitment and habits that make a good marriage are missing in the cohabiting arrangement, and it is hard to unlearn poor relationship patterns if living together finally gives way to marriage. Long-lasting marriages do not come from trial-size bottles.

In some situations, living together without being married simply indicates ignorance of God's plan, and quick repentance upon hearing the truth of the matter evidences the good hearts of the uninformed; by God's grace such couples can thrive in marriage.

Moving in with a member of the opposite sex tends only to move one farther from God. God wants what is best for us. He has always known what He is talking about. 

Danny Boggs preaches for the Hillcrest church in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

How Is Your Family Doing?

John Gipson

The family is the cradle and custodian of the future.


A famous psychologist, H. A. Overstreet, has defined the family as the place where a child can grow: from ignorance toward knowledge, from irresponsibility to responsibility, from verbal isolation into communication, from sexual immaturity to maturity, from egocentricity to interest in others, and from particular seeing into whole seeing.

If you think the family is not important, then why does the Bible have so much to say about husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, and children?



On every hand we are harvesting the crops sown by sick families. A lack of love has produced boys and girls who have not been taught, encouraged, corrected, disciplined, or admonished. In turn, this unhealthy family life has brought a blight to our schools, our work places, our churches, and our society in general.

We set up metal detectors to screen students bringing weapons to school; we build new prisons to accommodate the lawless; we create drug rehabilitation programs for the addicted; we write new laws governing drunk driving; we contemplate legalizing drugs; we decriminalize abortion; we promote “safe sex”; we search for cures for AIDS; and on and on the story goes.

Our problems are not going to be solved until we make our families whole again. 

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Saving a Marriage

Dale Grissom

There is an increase in divorce among Christians with the growing influence of the world upon the church. Lives sometimes seem to get out of control, and one or both marriage partners may reach a point where they have real difficulty coping. Lines of communication close, and they are unable to talk to each other without hurting and misunderstanding. Usually, at this point, pride and stubbornness take over and the couple needs help.

Most marriages can be saved if both partners really want the marriage to work, and if they are willing to put away the stubborn pride that gets in their way. Christian counseling can be of great benefit if both consent. The key is that both desire to save their marriage.

Christian marriages become troubled when couples begin drifting away from the Lord. Sometimes they begin to neglect worship, and in their private lives they neglect to pray, meditate, and study the Bible. Negligence opens the door to sin, and when sin enters, it brings hurt and pain. Their thinking becomes clouded. They have difficulty finding their way back to a solid relationship without the help of a good Christian counselor.

Nothing benefits a couple more than trusting in the Lord and being able to lay burdens upon Him. He guides us through His Word; because the Bible is the greatest book ever written, the best lessons in psychology can be gleaned from it. Good marriages do not happen by accident; they are the result of hard work. Husbands and wives must put away false pride and arrogance, and put on humility, which enables us to give a soft answer. The Golden Rule is a must for those who desire to have a good marriage. To **“do unto others as you would have them do unto you”** (cf., Matthew 7:12) will make every marriage grow better as the years pass.

Resolve to stay close to God and to work hard to build a good marriage.

Pull together and stay together!



Dale Grissom (1927-2014) was a dedicated worker for the Lord as he served for many years in the Lord's church in Dexter, Missouri, USA.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

Thankfulness

1. “Rooted and built up in him and established in the _____, as you have been _____, abounding in it with _____.” Colossians 2:7
2. “Be _____ for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your _____ be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6
3. “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into his _____ with _____. Be _____ to Him, and bless his name.” Psalms 100:4
4. “Thanks be to God for His _____ gift!” 2 Corinthians 9:15
5. “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank you, _____, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have _____ these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to _____.’” Matthew 11:25
6. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly _____, being understood by the things that are made, even His _____ power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because _____, although they knew God, they did not _____ Him as God, nor were _____, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:20,21



- Answers:**
1. Faith, taught, thanksgiving
 2. Anxious, requests
 3. Courts, praise, thankful
 4. Indescribable
 5. Father, hidden, babes
 6. Seen, eternal, glory, thank-ful

The Joy Chapter of the Bible

David Shannon

Just as 1 Corinthians 13 is referred to as the “Love Chapter” of the Bible, why isn’t Luke 15 called the “Joy Chapter” of the Bible?

What is Luke 15 about? Would you answer that it is about the lost being found? That would be correct, but if you answered this question based upon the emphasis through repeated content, the answer would have to be slightly different. Luke 15 is a chapter about the joy experienced when the lost is found. In this parable, Jesus tells three stories.



Proof in Story One: The story of the one sheep straying from the other 99 is told in 1.5 verses. The rejoicing fills 2.5 verses. Nearly twice the time is spent on the rejoicing. First, the shepherd rejoices as he lays the sheep on his shoulders. Then, he calls friends and neighbors to rejoice. Then, Jesus summarizes the whole account in Verse Seven. He didn’t describe the search, the lost one, or the shepherd. Jesus described the joy in heaven when the lost sinner repents.

Proof in Story Two: The story of the woman searching for the lost coin is told in one verse. Twice as many verses describe the rejoicing. Verse nine describes her calling her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her, and Verse 10 gives a similar summary as the previous story. Verse 10 describes the joy experienced by the angels in the presence of God because the sinner repents.



Proof in Story Three: Story three is much longer and is often considered one of the most beautiful short stories ever written. Each phrase is like a stroke of a great artist painting joy in the Father’s house.

TEXTUAL STUDIES



For nine verses the son's prodigal life is described. The next five verses describe the Father's reaction as the son returned. In a word it was "joy". The older son wasn't happy (no joy) about the Father's joy or the brother's return. The last verse of the chapter summarized the Father's and elder brother's discussion. It also summarized the story. It likewise summarized the point of all three parables. ***"It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."***

What should bring real joy into your life? Grow a heart which longs so much for the lost to come home that when they do, your joy resembles the joy in Heaven. I wonder how often Paul thought of Jesus' parable when he made statements such as, ***"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy"*** (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20).

Are you an "elder brother" type or "Father" type? Just see what makes you happy and you will know which you are. Let's do "right" (verse 32).✚

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

TEXTUAL STUDIES

The End of the Matter

Jim Laws

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

I am sure this is not the first time you have read this interesting Bible passage. It comes from the Book of Ecclesiastes, which is a book of poetry written by Solomon. It surveyed the most important matters of life and came to the conclusion that you read above. He wrote as one laboring, as if he could master the world. The writer discovered life is truly meaningless if one leaves out God. When we read this passage, which serves as a type of concluding statement to the whole experience of a life lived, we find two categories that need to be outlined.

In the **first category** are **the things we should do**. Look at the passage again to see if you can pick out these important points. First, he mentioned the fact we should *“fear God”*. This does not mean we should fear God as we might a Texas rattlesnake or a vicious beast, but we should revere Him, honor Him, and highly esteem Him. Jesus taught the disciples to pray, *“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”* A wise man reminds us *“the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge”* (Proverbs 1:7).

Second, he told us to *“keep his commandments”*. God’s commandments are numerous; however, they can be summarized by two commands. The first is, *“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength”*. The second is, *“Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself”* (Mark 12:31).

In the **second category** are **the reasons assigned** for the things we should do. Notice his statement about the *“whole duty of man”*. This declaration functions as a type of purpose statement for the above responsibilities. This is the sum and substance of the life that is truly great. Loving God supremely, you will gladly obey Him. You see, it is not a

TEXTUAL STUDIES

burden to obey the person you love (John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 5:3). If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, you will do him no harm (Romans 13:8-10); in fact, you will help him along the way (Luke 10:25-37). Further, he revealed a fact we learn from the New Testament (i.e., the deeds we do now will arise and follow us). He says, ***“For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing...”***

What we do in this life continues to follow us. Our deeds will follow us across to life’s other side. In the last great day, they will stand as witnesses before the great white throne. Our deeds will testify for us or against us. Noble deeds will speak for us, evil deeds against us (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Broken down into its parts, a tremendous passage of Scripture is discovered. This verse may be brief, but it is full of insightful truth, which is what we find in all the passages we study carefully. ✝

Jim Laws is the preacher for the Broadway congregation of the Lord’s church in Tyler, Texas, USA.

Why Were They Called Christians? Jerry Bates

In Acts 11:26, we find an interesting statement, ***“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”*** Peter said that we should be proud of wearing that name. “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:16).

Why were the early disciples first called Christians in Antioch rather than in Jerusalem? After all, the church had been in existence for several years (possibly 10 years), so why would the name be given or taken in Antioch after several years rather than in Jerusalem? At first, the church was composed of only Jews and was considered to be a sect of the Jews. However, in Antioch, this designation would not work because this was the first predominately Gentile church. They were no more Jews than they were pagans. Both Jews and Gentiles now met on equal terms, so a new name was needed to identify these people. Now ethnicity was replaced by an identity with Christ. Luke’s message in Acts 11:26 is that the church was so identified with Christ that even outsiders could find no better label to characterize this group.

We need to be so intimately connected to Christ that the same would be true today. When people see us and look at our lives, they should immediately think about the teachings of Jesus and identify us with Him. Is this true of your life? ✝

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Do these Answers Work?

Betty Burton Choate

In these short analyses of several Bible topics, I want to offer some obvious points that would help us to draw obvious conclusions.

What about the “Gospels” that tell of Jesus performing miracles as a child”

Jesus Himself warned in Matthew 12:22-32 that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven. What prompted that warning? The accusations of the Pharisees that He was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. His warning identified the Power by which He did His miracles, by the Holy Spirit who came to Him *“without measure”* (John 3:34) at the time of His baptism. John 14:24 teaches *“...the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”* It was at Jesus’ baptism that God spoke from Heaven and that the Holy Spirit descended on Christ. **Before His baptism, there is no biblical record of any inspired teaching or of any miracle.** He Himself attributed His words and His works to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, not to the use of His own power. Philippians 2:5-7 and Hebrews 2:17 show that in the flesh He was dependent on God, just as we are.

Was the thief on the cross saved without baptism?

The assumption is often made that the thief was saved without baptism, and so that should be possible today. Such an assumption misses two important factors: (1) The thief lived and died before the New Covenant came into effect and being sealed by the blood of Christ. As is shown repeatedly through the Gospel accounts, Jesus—as God—had the authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:3-12).

(2) Did you notice what the thief said? Even hanging there, dying on a cross and knowing that Jesus was also dying, he addressed Him as “Lord”! Obviously, this was not the thief’s first encounter with Jesus and His claims to be the Son of God! Though ten of the apostles seemingly had lost sight of everything Jesus had taught about establishing His kingdom, the thief asked Him to remember him when He came into His kingdom! This shows that he not only knew about Jesus’ message, but that he understood that the

TEXTUAL STUDIES

promised kingdom was a spiritual one which would not be destroyed by the death of its founder! What knowledge and what faith!

“Preach Christ but not the church”

The church, of course, is the promised kingdom, as identified in Matthew 16:18,19. Matthew 3:2 says that John came preaching, **“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”** Matthew 4:17 gives the subject of Jesus’ sermons: **“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”** If one takes the time to read through the Gospel accounts and to underline each passage where Jesus preached about Himself and Who He is, and the passages where He preached about the kingdom, the message is clear. The church was founded on the bedrock fact that Jesus is the Son of God, as Peter confessed in Matthew 16:16. Jesus’ focus, however, in His teaching was the new spiritual life He was bringing to the world in establishing the kingdom, the church, so that all who will hear can leave the world and be born into the family of God. We **cannot** preach Christ without preaching the church!

Our teaching must be loving, as Jesus always showed love.

Yes, always our message must be permeated with the love that brought Jesus to the world and that took Him to the cross. We must exercise patience and compassion as we share that Truth with those who have not heard and understood. Yet, have you noticed how little patience Jesus had with false teachers and hypocrites? Go through the Gospel accounts and number the many times He responded to some statement with, **“Woe unto you, Pharisees, hypocrites...”** **“Woe unto you, blind guides...”** **“Fools and blind...”** (Matthew 23).

Who wrote the book of Hebrews?

Often it is surmised that Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews, even though it lacks the identification he gave in the epistles he did write. However, the one who wrote the book made the statement in 2:3, **“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?”** Obviously, the one who did the writing was not an apostle, and his understanding about the teachings of Christ were confirmed to him **“by those who heard Him”**.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Yet, in Galatians 1:12 Paul declared, “...*the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Verses 15-18 inform us that after Paul’s baptism, he spent the same length of time in isolation in Arabia and Damascus as the other apostles had spent with Jesus during His earthly ministry. It was only at the end of that time that Paul went to Jerusalem and met with Peter. Since Hebrews is a careful study of the contrast between the Old law and the New, maybe Apollos was the author, since he was “*mighty in the Scriptures*” (Acts 18:24).

Will there be signs heralding the return of Christ?

Many false teachers identify signs and set dates, declaring that they know when Christ will return. In essence, they are boldly claiming to know more than Jesus knew, for He said in Matthew 24:36, “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*” He went on to make two descriptions of what it will be like “*in the last days*”. People will be marrying, and eating and drinking — seeming normalcy about the things of daily life. Even more, there is a further intensity in His description. He said it will be like it was in the days of Noah! In what kind of world did Noah live? “...*the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Genesis 6:5). How long did Noah preach without one convert? It seems that the Lord will return when there is evil everywhere, to such an extent that the saved will be few, and no soul is still looking for the truth.

To Whom and through Whom must we pray?

We hear experienced Christians praying, “Our **Father**, we thank You for **Your body** that was broken for us... for **Your blood** that was shed for us...” Or, they pray “**Our Father**” and then close, “In **Your** holy name”. The Scriptures clearly show **the Godhead**: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). In **the Spirit** (Romans 8:26) we pray to **the Father**, through the mediation of **the Son** (John 16:23). God the Father did not die for us; His Son, Jesus Christ gave His body, and we pray in His name. Please, let us be scriptural in our prayers! †

Betty B. Choate works with the World Evangelism team in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



Scavenger Hunt

through Daniel

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. How many years of training did the king assign for the captive young men of Judah?
2. Give the Hebrew names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
3. Name the materials that formed the image in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
4. Name the instruments that were played to indicate the people must bow to the golden image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar.
5. How much hotter than normal was the fiery furnace heated when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow to the golden image?
6. Name the reward King Belshazzar promised to the one who could interpret the handwriting on the wall.
7. For how many days did a decree make it illegal to petition anyone other than King Darius?
8. How many times each day did Daniel pray to God before the window facing Jerusalem?
9. Who was thrown in the den of lions after Daniel?
10. Name the foreign kings under whom Daniel served.

It Is Not How You Start

Jimmy Clark

“But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die” (Ezekiel 18:24).

Peter wrote, *“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Peter 2:20,21).*

Consider some biblical examples of some who started out faithful, but fell at the end.

1. The Political-Minded

King Saul. Saul, son of Kish, started out very humble and initially was a great servant of God. It is written of him when Samuel was presenting him before the nation, *“Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, ‘Has the man come here yet?’ And the Lord answered, ‘There he is, hidden among the equipment’”* (1 Samuel 10:22). Saul was faithful in the matter of the victory over the Ammonites over Jabesh-Gilead (1 Samuel 11). However, Saul ultimately let the power of being king get the best of him. He transgressed the commandment of the Lord and said to Samuel, *“I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God”* (1 Samuel 15:30). The record of his repeated attempts to kill the faithful servant David shows his change of heart from righteousness to rebellion. His end would show the sad close to a once-promising leader (1 Samuel

BIBLE CHARACTERS

31:4). His start was greater than his end.

2. The Pretentious Ananias and Sapphira. The church in Jerusalem was strong with few issues. Luke wrote, *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common”* (Acts 4:32). Barnabas showed such an illustration for good (Acts 4:36-37). Ananias and Sapphira showed that there were materialistic elements within the church (Acts 5:1-11). Peter said to Sapphira before she died, *“How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out”* (Acts 5:9). They illustrate conversion turned to covetousness.

3. The Present-World Loving Demas. Paul had a companion that was listed among the faithful in the work. Paul wrote to the Colossian brethren, *“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you”* (Colossians 4:14). He would write to Philemon, *“Marcus, Aristarchus,*

Demas, Lucas, my fellow-laborers” (Philemon 24). However, Paul later wrote to Timothy, *“for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica”* (2 Timothy 4:10). That is the last thing said about him in the New Testament. It is a sad thought to ponder those who started out with the zeal for the Lord, only to go back into the world of sin and sorrow. It will always be important to remember that it is not merely about how one starts. †

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

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12,13 NKJV; cf. Hebrews 4:11; Mark 14:38).


BIBLE CHARACTERS

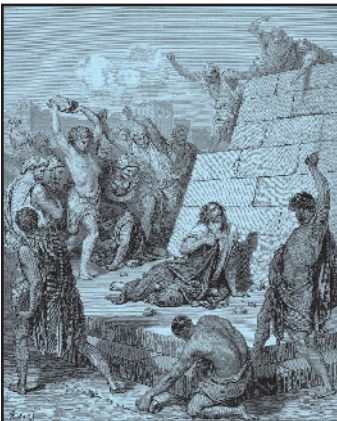
STEPHEN

Jack Harriman

Stephen was one of seven men appointed to take care of a certain group of widows who were being neglected. He became a powerful miracle worker, preacher, and defender of the faith. We remember him best as the first Christian to die for the faith. His account is told in Acts 6-7.

Only recently did I see the greatness of this man as Luke presented him in Acts 6. He was said to be a man full of faith (5), full of the Holy Spirit (5), full of wisdom (3,10), full of grace (8), full of power (8), and full of light (15). From Acts 7, three more attributes can be added. He was full of the Scripture, full of courage, and full of love.

Alexander Whyte said of Stephen, "In the stoning of Stephen there was lost to the church another apostle Paul. Stephen was a young man of such original genius and such special grace that there was nothing he might not have attained to had he been allowed to live. His wonderful openness of mind; his perfect freedom from all the prejudices and superstitions of his day; his courage; his eloquence; his spotless character; with a certain sweet, and at the same time majestic, manner; combined to set Stephen in the very front rank, both of service and of risk. In all these things, and especially in the openness, receptiveness, and ripeness of his mind, Stephen far outstripped even such pillar apostles as Peter and James and John themselves... All of these things made Stephen the foremost man of his day, and, as a consequence, the first man to be struck at and struck down." 



Jack Harriman is a Gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Epaphras, a Servant of Christ Jesus

Harvey Porter

Paul closed a number of his letters by listing those who were working with him in the spread of Christianity. Most often he gave some information about them and why they, too, were dear to the church or individual to whom he was writing.

When Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, he closed by saying, *“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis”* (Colossians 4:12,13).

Epaphras was described by Paul to the Colossians as *“one of you”*. This was his home congregation. Not only that, he was well-known to the fellow Christians at Laodicea

and Hierapolis, two towns that were close by Epaphras “sent greetings.” They meant a lot to him, and he to them. It is wonderful to be loved by a whole church, and in turn, to love that church.

In fact, Epaphras loved that church so much that they were constantly in his prayers. Paul said, *“He is always wrestling in prayer for you”*. The word “wrestling” reminds us that Jacob wrestled with an angel while he was in prayer. Our English word, “agony”, comes from this Greek word. It means to toil, even to the point of exhaustion. How would you like to have someone with Christian character like Epaphras praying for you all of the time?

His prayers were not for food, clothing, even for good physical health, or for money. His prayers for them were that they might *“stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured”*.

That is what all of us ought to be praying for the church we love. What a church we would be if everyone would stand firm in all the will of God. You would not have any lukewarm members. No one would drop out or *“forsake the*

BIBLE CHARACTERS

assembly". The church of today greatly needs to "***stand firm in all the will of God***".

sufficient for our life; we want no other. So, we pray with Jesus, "***Not my will, but thine be done***".

Let us all be "wrestling in prayer" for our brothers and sisters in the church of which we are a part. In this way we can be "servants of Jesus Christ", just as Epaphras was.

Epaphras wanted all whom he knew to be "mature". We all agree with that prayer. The church needs mature Christians – big enough to overlook petty differences, strong enough to love those with whom we differ, and patient enough to work out all problems. Mature Christians never quit, give up, or cease serving. The Lord can always count upon them, for they are always there.

Epaphras prayed that they might be "***fully assured in all the will of God***". One commentator said, "The thought is the attentive obedience which holds sacred each detail of the Master's orders." Chrysostom wrote, "It is not enough, simply to do His will. He that is filled, sufferth not any other will to be within him, for if so, he is not wholly filled." The whole will of God is

There is no doubt that Epaphras must have loved those Christians, because he prayed so fervently for them and asked the Lord to bless them "***to stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured***". What a wonderful prayer! It covers the whole of our Christian living in just a few words. It is a prayer that we must pray for the congregation where we are worshipping today. Our needs are the same as those of Christians so long ago. Our God and our Lord Jesus are the same and want to bless us just as they did then. So, let us all be "***wrestling in prayer***" for our brothers and sisters in the church of which we are a part. In this way we can be "***servants of Jesus Christ***", just as Epaphras was. ✝

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

What about the Flood?

Dennis Gullede

“Was the flood in Noah’s day local or universal in scope?”

It was a universal flood. The Bible says, *“And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die”* (Genesis 6:17). *“And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered”* (Genesis 7:19). *“And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth...”* (Genesis 7:23). Peter wrote, *“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished...”* (2 Peter 3:6).



The idea of a local flood somewhere in western Asia presents some very knotty problems. If the flood was local, why was it necessary to build a boat the size of the ark? In fact, why was it necessary to build an ark at all? Why not just move to the mountains? Animals instinctively move to higher ground in flood situations. Survival for them would have been easy. Birds could have flown to drier regions. It is not possible to believe the Bible and at the same time accept the idea of a local and limited flood. †

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

BIBLE QUESTIONS

How Important Is the Mode of Baptism?

Charles R. Rose

Many of our religious neighbors will tell you that baptism is a non-essential when it comes to salvation of the soul. However, to become a member of their churches one must be baptized. Some wise scribe made the comment many years ago that “it is easier to get to heaven than to get into most churches today.” That being said, still, most religious organizations practice and require some form of baptism in their teachings, whether for salvation or to “join” their church. Some practice the act of “sprinkling” wherein the minister or the priest will sprinkle a little water on the recipient. Others will take a small container of water and “pour” it over the head of the one being “baptized”. Still others practice “immersion” for baptism. Of these three, which was taught and practiced by Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles? Does it really matter?

Funk & Wagnall's Standard Desk Dictionary defines the word “baptize” in this manner: “To immerse in water or sprinkle water on in Christian baptism.” Realizing that the New Testament was originally written in Greek, one should look to the Greek scholars to see what God really meant in His Holy Word. How did His disciples baptize converts in New Testament times? Please notice the following words from the Greek.

- “Sprinkle” is translated into English from the Greek word *rantizo*.
- “Pour” is from the Greek *cheo*.
- “Immerse” is taken from the Greek word *baptizo*.

Which is used in the Bible? Please read from your own Bible the following passages. When Jesus was baptized, He “**went up straightway out of the water**” (Matthew 3:13-17). “**John also was baptizing at Aenon... because there was much water there**” (John 3:23). Both Philip and the eunuch “**went down into the water, and he baptized him and**

BIBLE QUESTIONS

they came up out of the water” (Acts 8:36-39). *“As many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death... we are buried with [Christ] in baptism into death”* (Romans 6:3,4).

In which of these recorded examples was sprinkling or pouring practiced? It must be admitted that in “sprinkling” or “pouring”, it does not take “much water” as in John 3:23; neither does it require a going down into and a coming out of the water as in the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ and the eunuch (Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38). Nor can one honestly and truthfully say one has been buried (Romans 6:3,4) when sprinkling or pouring is practiced.

One can go to history books and read comments of the religious leaders that were the founding fathers of our modern-day denominations that now practice sprinkling or pouring to see that those religious leaders did not believe as their followers do today.




➤ **John Calvin (Presbyterian)**

said, “The word

‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the primitive church.”

➤ **Martin Luther (Lutheran)** commented, “Baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated, immerse. I would have those who are baptized to be altogether dipped.”

➤ **John Wesley (Methodist)** said, “Buried with him by baptism – alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.”

Does it matter? Please note from your own Bible that baptism in the New Testament was *“for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38), for the *“washing away of sins”* (Acts 22:16), for salvation (1 Peter 3:21), and to place one into Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26,27; Romans 6:3,4). 

Charles R. Rose is the preacher for the church of Christ in Lincoln, Missouri, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

THE NICOLAITANS, WHO WERE THEY?

Mike Riley

In Revelation 2:6,15, we read about the “deeds” and the “doctrine” of the Nicolaitans. Just who were the Nicolaitans, what were their deeds, and what was their doctrine?

The word, “Nicolaitans” means “destruction of people”. They were a sect or party of evil influence in early Christianity, especially in the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1:11). Their apostate doctrine was similar to that of Balaam, *“who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication”* (Revelation 2:14,15; Numbers 22-25; 2 Peter 2:15,16; Jude 1:11). Their intent was not only to commit the immoral excesses of the heathen, in direct opposition to the decree of the church given in Acts 15:20,29, but they also engaged in the orgies of idolatrous feasts. They seemingly brought the impurities of those feasts into the meetings of the early first century church. They are described like the false prophets in 2 Peter 2:1.



While not much is known regarding the Nicolaitans, we do know that the church at Ephesus *“hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans”* (Revelation 2:6), and that the church in Pergamum had taken a compromising position toward their apostate teaching (Revelation 2:12-15). To accept the teachings of Balaam or the Nicolaitans was a practice condemned by our Lord (Revelation 2:6,15,16). In fact, any idolatrous practice is condemned in the Bible and is to be avoided at all costs (1 Samuel 15:23; 1 Corinthians 10:14; Galatians 5:19-20; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). ✝

Great Lessons from Job

Therman Hodge

I. The Book of Job teaches us that Satan is relentless in his efforts to capture men (1:7; 2:2).

A. Peter tells us that Satan is constantly looking for men to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

B. Paul indicates that he knew Satan employed a number of different devices to discourage and hold back the progress of the church (2 Corinthians 2:11).

C. The devil sends wolves from outside to destroy God's flock by false teaching and employs even some church leaders to teach false doctrine and draw sheep away from the truth (Acts 20:28-31); 2 Timothy 4:3-5).



CHARTS & OUTLINES

D. He also uses division into groups following after men instead of the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).


II. Job also teaches us that human philosophy falls short (16:2-3).

- A. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that man does not have the wisdom to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23).
- B. It is God's wisdom that can teach us to do good works and set us on the path to perfection (1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).
- C. Therefore, Paul would tell us to cast down human wisdom and pride (2 Corinthians 10:5).

III. Total trust should be placed in God, as Job further demonstrates (42:1-6).

- A. The wise man of old would also instruct us to rely on God (Proverbs 3:5-7).
- B. Likewise, David, the singer of Israel, points us to God for strength (Psalm 33:8-12).
- C. No wonder Paul asked the rhetorical question, *"If God is for us who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31).

IV. The greatest lesson in the Book of Job is that all of life's most perplexing questions are answered in Jesus Christ.

- A. Job desired an umpire between himself and God (23:3; 9:33).
- B. We know that Jesus provides for that need (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 4:14-16).
- C. Job wondered if there was life beyond the grave (14:14).
- D. Jesus has shown us that there is a resurrection by His teaching and by overcoming the tomb (John 11:25,26; 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:1-26; Colossians 3:4).
- E. Like all of us, Job desired a place of rest (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:1-11).
- F. It is a place that will free us from all of this life's worries and cares, sorrows and pains (Revelation 21:4-7). 

Therman Hodge is a Gospel preacher and a short-term missionary to several countries. He resides in Meridian, Mississippi, USA.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

Moved Away (Colossians 1:23)

Ken Tyler

Introduction: It hurts a congregation when members move away. There is another kind of “moving away” that is much more detrimental to the church. When we “move away” from Jesus Christ, we destroy our souls and hurt the church. Consider the following questions.

I. Have you “moved away” from the truth of the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9-11)?


- A. The plan of salvation (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:30; Acts 8:37; Acts 2:38).
- B. Worship (John 4:23,24; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- C. Organization of the church (Philippians 1:1).

II. Have you “moved away” from the love that Jesus taught and exhibited (Matthew 22:35-40; Luke 23:34)?

- A. Love means we keep His commandments (1 John 5:3).
- B. Love means we practice **The Golden Rule** (Matthew 7:12).
- C. Love means we forgive (Acts 7:60).
- D. Love means we love our enemies (Matthew 5:44,45).
- E. Love means we show the world our discipleship (John 13:35).

III. Have you “moved away” from the church being your first priority (Matthew 6:33)?

- A. Attendance (Hebrews 10:25).
- B. Souls (Acts 8:4; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19,20).
- C. Build (1 Corinthians 14:12).
- D. Pray (Hebrews 13:18).
- E. Work (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- F. Give (Proverbs 3:9,10).

Conclusion: None of us can afford to “move away” from Christ. **Have you checked your address lately?** 

Ken Tyler preaches for the Lord's church in Arab, Alabama, USA.

IS RESTORATION A DESIRABLE GOAL?

D. Gene West

For over two hundred years churches of Christ in America have been engaged in the formidable effort to restore in our time the church of which we read in the New Testament. When this movement began with the work of Stone, Campbell, Scott, Smith and hundreds of others, it was believed that the only way religious unity could be attained would be for people to do two things: (1) To return to the Bible for all that we do in matters of religion. Thomas Campbell coined, in his own unique way, the watchword of the early movement which was, “We speak where the Scriptures speak and we are silent where the Scriptures are silent.” (Someone has said we have no trouble in speaking where the Scriptures speak, but our problem is deciding when they are silent. There may be some truth to that.) (2) We should attempt to restore the order and worship of the church to the same thing that it was in apostolic times.

It would seem that the first of these would lead as naturally to the second as anything can. For example, if the Bible teaches the immersion of penitent believers for the remission of sins and we do only that which is taught in the Bible regarding the manner in which one is saved, then we could not help but restore the ancient order of things to that degree. We further illustrate by pointing out that if the Scriptures teach that the apostolic church was set up in a congregational style with a plurality of elders shepherding each flock of God’s people, and if we follow only what is found in the New Testament on this matter, we will naturally restore the ancient order for the church. One of these things seems to follow the other so naturally that we really do not think of them in separate terms.


This has brought about a great deal of happiness among religious people in America, and other places, but at the same time it has created its share of grief. Or perhaps we have created the grief by misapplying the principles set forth above. In the early days of the restoration movement people flocked to these ideals, and within a very few years the number of those who subscribed to them had risen to nearly two million.

CHURCH HISTORY

Then came trouble! Men wanted to do missionary work both at home and abroad using societies set up for that purpose that could not be controlled by the churches. Men decided that we should add the use of instrumental music to our worship. A pastor system was set up in such a way as to transfer the authority for the well-being of congregations from the hands of elders to that of preachers. Within a hundred years of the beginning of this great enterprise, thousands had moved away from it. Trouble brewed on every hand among the saints. Division, sorrow, ill-will, perhaps even hatred followed, and only a very few of the millions were left to plead for the restoration of New Testament Christianity.

The Disciples of Christ finally moved away and abandoned the ideal of restoration, while the Christian Church was willing to restore up to a point, so long as they could worship according to their desires, and organize according to their desires they were very willing to call themselves “a branch of the restoration movement”. Only churches of Christ stood alone in this attempt up until the last quarter of a century. Now many are wanting to walk in the path of the Christian Churches with regard to worship and other such matters. Some of our people, in great earnest are asking, “Is it even desirable to attempt to restore the Christianity of which we read in the New Testament?”

In answer to this question, we have chosen to ask a series of questions. If we turn away from going to the Bible and the Bible alone for our authority in matters of religion, to what source shall we go? Some say, “Oh, we are not suggesting to do away with the Bible!” Yet, what else are we doing when we abandon its teachings on worship or any other matter?

If it is no longer desirable to restore that perfect order of things found in the New Testament, to what shall we turn? Shall we turn to the leaders of the Reformation, back to the early days of the Roman Catholic Church, or to the Eastern Orthodox? Shall we just turn away from the Bible and do whatever feels good? To whom shall we go, for the Lord alone has the words of eternal life (John 6:68)? Let us continue to struggle on! We have nowhere else to turn! There is nothing better out there! 

D. Gene West is a Gospel preacher and an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA.

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

Verse Search (Page 36)

1. False
2. Sexual, Lord, Lord
3. Raise
4. Members
5. Body
6. Genesis 2:24
7. Joined, spirit
8. His own body
9. Temple
10. Bought
11. Glorify God

Bible Find (page 43)



Scavenger Hunt (page 94)

Answers:

1. 3 years, 1:5
2. Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, 1:6,7
3. gold, silver, bronze, iron, clay, 2:31-35
4. horn, flute, harp, lyre, psaltery, 3:5
5. 7 times, 3:19
6. clothed in purple, gold chain around his neck, be third ruler in the kingdom, 5:7
7. 30 days, 6:7
8. 3 times, 6:10,13
9. Daniel's accusers, their wives, their children, 6:24
10. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Cyrus, 1:1,21; 5:1,13; 5:30-6:2,28

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Thou Shalt Call and I Will Answer

Betty Burton Choate

**Oh, my Father, in the morning,
In the dawning of my days,
Thou shalt call and I will answer
With a song of ringing praise.**

**In the happy dreams of childhood,
In the years of growing joy,
Thou shalt call and I will answer,
In Thy work my hands employ.**

**Through the burning of the noonday
When I stumble in the heat,
Thou shalt call, oh loving Father,
And my tongue will answer Thee.**

**Though so weary from the burden
In the sultry afternoon,
Thou shalt call and I will answer
For my rest comes sure and soon.**

**Oh, my Father, in the sunset,
When the warmth dies with the light,
Thou shalt call and I will answer,
Unafraid to face the night.**

**Thou shalt call me through the darkness
When my work at last is done;
I will hear the wings of angels
Sent from Thee to bring me home.**

Chorus:

**Thou shalt call me, oh my Father,
Endless work there is to do;
Take my hands, my feet, and use them,
Let me live and die for You!**

(Recorded hymn available at WorldEvangelism.org website)