

VOLUME NINETY - EIGHT

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



TELL THE WORLD!

Growing Tall

Joslyn Ramsubhag

*Growing tall like a big strong tree
Enjoying all the wintry freeze
Ever so upright everyone sees
Even weaklings tossed by the breeze*

*Roots all sturdy in solid ground
Ever so graceful a slender trunk
All the leaves as scenic green
Sprouts from branches way up seen*

*Of all the elms in the forested park
Your luscious green will glow in dark
Like all the birds building nests
Folks flow to you with zest*

*Growing tall in the Lord
Means being planted in fertile soil
Mighty winds coming your way
Dare not cause you to sway*

*Roots within the Word nourished
No wonder that you flourish
Standing tall as a stately immortelle
Your fruits bountiful anyone can tell!*

SEEING MAN'S CHOICE IN SALVATION

Chart by Wes Garland, Illustrated by Robert C. Lupo

If you were to examine your life according to this chart, where would you stand and in what direction of destination would you be going?



It takes the Bible plus...

1. The Baptist Manual to become a Baptist
2. The Catechism to become a Catholic
3. The writings of Luther to become a Lutheran
4. The writings of Calvin to become a Presbyterian

**GOD CALLED HIS PEOPLE
“CHRISTIANS” Isa 62:1-2**

ACTS 11:26; 26:28; 1PE 4:16

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

JOHN 12:48-50

REVELATION 22:18-19

**ALL DENOMINATIONAL DOGMAS
WILL BE DESTROYED BY JESUS**

MATTHEW 15:9-13



**NO
PREFIX**

**NO
SUFFIX**

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).



Why Have You Forsaken Me?

Louis Rushmore

Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 recorded one of Jesus' statements on the cross not long before He died. The account in the Gospel According to Mark reads, *“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You*

forsaken Me?’” (NKJV). These words are a quotation of Psalm 22:1, where we find, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?”* David's Psalm 22 is noted for being Messianic and prophetic about the sufferings of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Through all the adversity described therein, nevertheless, an unflinching confidence in Almighty God concludes Psalm 22.

The questions arise, *“Why did Jesus on the cross utter, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”; “What did Jesus’ statement mean?”* and *“In what sense did God the Father ‘forsake’ Christ on the cross?”* Scripture does not answer these questions for us specifically. Hence, commentators are perplexed and provide varying explanations. Like some similarly difficult biblical passages, it is easier to declare what the passage **does not** mean than it is to confidently affirm what it does mean. As such, for instance, the notion is rejected that the divine side of our Lord separated from the human side, leaving only the abandoned, suffering and confused human on the cross.

Instead, following are some of the best observations from commentators that offer plausible and biblically compatible insight to our Lord's utterance on the cross, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”*


- “Jesus sensed a separation from the Father He had never known, for

in becoming sin the Father had to turn judicially from His Son (Rom 3:25-26).” (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

- “Jesus had been made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21).” (*Bible Exposition Commentary*)
- “He was bearing the sins of the whole world; the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all; there was no one to comfort him in his heaviness; and the light of God’s countenance was for the time withdrawn from him. He was ‘left’ that he might bear man’s sins in their full and crushing weight, and by bearing save.” (*Pulpit Commentary*)
- “Nothing from Jesus so well illustrates the depth of his suffering of soul as he felt himself regarded as sin though sinless (2 Cor 5:21).” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament*)
- “...solitude or loneliness because God, who cannot look upon sin (Isa. 59:1-2), forsook Jesus (in a sense) as He bore the sin of the world in His death upon the cross. Paul states, ‘**For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**’ (II Cor. 5:21). It is also a prayer of crisis because of the humanity of Jesus and the intense suffering which He was undergoing and because the Sinless One, “who did no sin” (I Pet. 2:22), was being made a sin offering. (Cook 56)

To my mind, the best explanation of Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34—**“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”**—is summed up by comparing Isaiah 59:1-2 with 2 Corinthians 5:21. **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear”** (Isaiah 59:1-2). **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”** (2 Corinthians 5:21). For a time, God the Father was “separated...from” ‘hid His face from’ and did “not hear” (acknowledge) Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross because our Lord was bearing all the sins of humanity. Our Holy God can have no association with sin. Therefore, while Jesus bore mankind’s burden of sin, God the Father could have no fellowship with Him. The agonizing expression of Jesus in Matthew 27:46 highlights the additional torture of a ruptured fellowship with God atop the excruciatingly painful death that He was experiencing. That breach of fellowship was

something that the Second Person of the Godhead had never experienced throughout eternity. Likewise, one of the punishments for the ungodly at the end of time is separation from the presence of God (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Afterward, the fellowship between God the Father and God the Son was restored as Jesus Christ ascended and took His place on **“the right hand of God”** (Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). **“...Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”** (1 Peter 3:21-22). 



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She Has Done What She Could

Jerry Bates

One of the greatest examples of giving is found in three of the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:39; John 12:1-8). These accounts concern Mary, the sister of Lazarus (John 11:2), while Jesus was eating in the house of Simon, who was a leper. Mary entered the home and anointed both the head and the feet of Jesus with fragrant oil. Picture this episode. Mary came walking into the room carrying a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume. Alabaster was a costly white marble imported from the western part of Egypt. The ointment was a very expensive liquid known for its smell, probably something like perfume. The disciples became indignant over this “waste,” at least in their opinion. Probably led by Judas, they complained that the ointment should have been sold and given to the poor. Jesus, on the other hand, commended her actions. *“She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial”* (Mark 14:8). If Mary had done this to the dead body of Jesus, likely no one would have complained about her actions. Jesus said she simply anointed His body before His death, which would occur very soon. What I want to emphasize is the short sentence, *“She has done what she could.”* Hopefully, that statement could be said of all of us.

This statement suggests that Christianity is a religion of doing things. It is not something one gets, but something one does. James said to *“be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”* (James



1:22). We are only deceiving ourselves if we think that knowing the Word of God is good enough. It must translate into action.

Jesus' commendation also implies that we should always do our best for God. Doesn't God deserve our best? Furthermore, we must be willing to give our best **now!** Do not let opportunities to serve God pass by. Funerals are attended by multitudes of people, many with hearts that are filled with regret over lost opportunities to express their love or to repair a broken relationship. How many opportunities to do something for God have you let pass by? When the Lord returns, will He find our alabaster boxes of time, talents, energy or possessions still unbroken?

In addition, we need to be willing to simply do what we can? Not everyone can do something great or be a great leader over some worthy project, but that doesn't mean there is nothing we can or should do. Jesus told a parable of a five-talent man and a two-talent man. Each doubled what they had. Even though the five-talent man accomplished much more than the two-talent man, both received the same reward, because each simply did what he could. It is easy to justify our lack of activity by comparing ourselves to others. Since we do not have as much money, time, talents, etc. as someone else, we do nothing. Ultimately, the question is not *what* are we doing? Rather, the question is, "*Are we doing what we can?*" That is the standard by which God will judge us. Are we willing to simply do what we can? Someone has written the following poem.

**I am only one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
What I can do, I ought to do.
What I ought to do, I will do, so help me God.**

I suppose all companies and sports teams have their “stars.” These are people with great natural abilities. Problems sometimes develop because these people realize they are “stars,” and they begin to think that natural ability alone makes them special and worthy of special treatment.

The same is often true spiritually. I have seen a few young people with exceptional speaking ability. It appears as if their potential is almost unlimited. However, their potential is often not realized. They may not finish school, and even if they do, they accomplish little of special notice. Recently, the director of a school of preaching commented on one of his young students that he was not one of the “stars.” He was not degrading this student’s natural ability. Rather, he was praising his other qualities, such as reliability, willingness to work hard and a desire to simply be the best he can be.

Those qualities are much more important than natural abilities. With those qualities, people with limited natural abilities can accomplish some amazing things. Without those qualities, people who possess great natural abilities will achieve little and certainly never come close to realizing their potential. It is great if you have abundant natural abilities, but natural abilities that are not utilized and developed are worth little. All of us, whether we are blessed with great natural abilities or limited talents, should simply try to be and do the best we can. That is all God expects, and with God’s help, any of us might accomplish some amazing things. The greatest need in the church is not eloquence, education or wealth, but the willing spirit that motivates each person to simply do what he can. †

All of us, whether we are blessed with great natural abilities or limited talents, should simply try to be and do the best we can. That is all God expects!



1932—2008

What the Great Commission Means to Me

J.C. Choate

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Our Saviour spoke these words to His apostles just before His ascension into Heaven to take His place at the right hand of God. These men who were gathered around Him had followed Him since His baptism by

John in the Jordan River; they were loyal and faithful to Him even though they did not always understand Him. Yet, this command they could understand. Peter had just asked, *“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”* The Lord’s answer was, *“Tarry ye In the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high: ...after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ...ye shall be witnesses unto me both In Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

Christ was speaking to the men who would be the first members of His body, the church, and He was giving them the instructions they were to follow. This command to go into all the world and to preach the good news of the Gospel was not an idle one—it was to be the propelling force that should move God’s people not only in the first century but throughout every generation since that time.

In making the statement we have just quoted, Jesus gave two commands: ***the first one is to the church; the second one is to the world.*** What did He say to the church? “Go and preach.” What did He say to the world? “Believe and be baptized.” For years, we of the body of Christ have wondered at the blindness of our religious friends when they fail to understand the second command, that they must believe and be baptized to be saved.

However, we have neglected to turn the mirror around and look at ourselves in it. *Is it any more unforgivable for them to refuse to obey than it is for us?* As individual Christians, we have complied with the second command, but we have somehow failed to see the importance of the first one to “go and preach this Gospel to others.” Are we also blind to the whole truth?

When I think of our attitude toward the Great Commission, I am reminded of the statements Jesus made concerning the man with a beam in his eye who tried to pick the mote from his neighbor’s eye. He said, *“Thou hypocrite!”* That isn’t a very pretty word, is it? Yet, many times, we are no more than pious hypocrites. We can’t see that we are failing our Lord even more than is our neighbor who is in religious ignorance and error.

To most of us, the Great Commission is no more than a few words that we believe, *but not very strongly*. We have heard our duty along this line pointed out so many times that our ears have callouses on them about an inch-and-a-half thick, and our hearts are covered by an even thicker shell. Brethren, too many of us just don’t much care! We are content to drift along in our little world of indifference and let the rest of mankind go by, unsaved.

I wonder: What will it take, short of that final jolt at the end of the journey, to get us to realize that the direction every “little world of indifference” floats toward is HELL! We can’t drift and float into eternal salvation; **we have to paddle like the devil is after us, because he is!** The majority of us have already been caught, and just don’t realize it. Brethren, the consequences of failing to preach the Gospel to all the world—disobedience to the Lord’s command—is eternal punishment for every person who is guilty. When will we wake up to the pit that lies before us and all mankind?

However, there is another reason for going into all the world and telling the story of Jesus. Just think for a minute: What would this world be today without the influence of Jesus Christ? What would your own life be without Him? Think what a blessing this one Man—God’s Son—has been to all those who have accepted Him! Yet, there are millions of people who have never even so much as heard the name of “Jesus.” They have not even an inkling of an idea that almost two thousand years ago this Jesus died for their sins. They have never been told of the perfect example after which they can pattern their own lives. They have received none of the blessings that come to all Christians. Just place yourself in their position

for a minute. Wouldn't such a life be one of terrible darkness? Well, you as a Christian can turn that darkness into light! It is your responsibility to do everything in your power to see that these people hear the story of Jesus.



Yet, this is more than a responsibility: It is a privilege! Just think: you have a Saviour. He has wiped away your past sins, and He continues to plead with God on your behalf. He has given you full instructions as to how to conduct your life. He has blessed you abundantly with both material and spiritual gifts. He has promised to save you for all eternity, to give you a home with Him and the Father. How much more could a people ask? Yet, all that He wants in return is for you to share this blessing of Christianity with the rest of the world! Can we be true Christians and do any less? I think not. Christ gave everything He had, even His life, for mankind—not only for you and me, but also for those in other lands who have never heard His name. Surely, if He gave all, we can at least share what we have from Him with those who deserve it as much as we do. †

***“Go ye therefore and
teach all nations...”***



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

God's Wisdom

- Who is wise and _____ among you? Let him show by good _____ that his works are done in the meekness of _____. James 3:13
- Listen to counsel and receive _____, that you may be wise in your _____ days. Proverbs 19:20
- The fear of the Lord is the _____ of wisdom, and the knowledge of the _____ is understanding. Proverbs 9:9
- When _____ enters your heart, and _____ is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of _____. Proverbs 2:10-12
- Thus says the _____: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the _____ man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this, that he _____ and knows Me that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I _____," says the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23-24
- Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of _____! How unsearchable are his _____ and his ways past finding out! Romans 11:33



Answers:

- Understanding, conduct, wisdom
- Instruction, latter
- Beginning, Holy One
- Wisdom, knowledge, evil
- Lord, rich, understands, delight
- God, judgments

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It Is All about Him!

Rodney Nulph

We live during an age known as the “entitlement age.” In other words, mankind feels as though he is entitled to certain blessings regardless of whether he works for them or not. For example, many believe they are entitled to have food, whether they work for it or not. These same ones often feel as though they are entitled to someone giving them shelter, even if they are lazy and unwilling to fulfill certain requirements. In fact, “I deserve that” is a phrase that is often heard or at least portrayed by some.


This mentality has entered into the arena of worship as well. **Sadly, many believe that worship is about them and what they like or do not like.** Ironically, even some leaders in the church have become **more concerned with offending someone than offending God.** This is clearly seen in leaders catering to the whims of people instead of appealing to the Word of God. While it should never be our intent to purposefully offend others, **we must first be concerned with what God desires.** Worship is not about us, it is **all about God!** Worship is not about my personal comfort or what I prefer or do not prefer. The question we must answer is why should we worship? Why do we worship the Creator and Sustainer of Heaven and Earth? Why is it all about Him and not about me?

Firstly, it is about God because **God is consecrated!** The idea of “consecration” from the biblical perspective refers to holiness and purity. God is holy; it is one of His fundamental characteristics. The Psalmist knew full well as he penned, ***“Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy”*** (Psalm 99:5). Just a few verses later, the Psalmist emphasized this point again (Psalm 99:9). **We worship God because He is worthy of our soul’s adoration, for He alone is holy, consecrated and pure!** Because God is infinitely holy, He deserves our adoration. Notice carefully, He does need our adoration, but He rightfully deserves it! God is still God whether or not I recognize Him as such! ***“Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things”*** (Acts 17:25). Worship is all about Him because God is consecrated!

GOD

Secondly, it is about God because **God is caring!** God's care, kindness and benevolent nature ought to cause each of us to fall before His throne and praise His great name! I can relate to the Psalmist's query, "*What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visit him?*" (Psalm 8:4). Part of what makes worship real is to recognize our nothingness and God's greatness! "*You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; The stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth*" (Psalm 65:9). How could anyone read such a verse and then come away feeling that worship is about them? Worship flows from a thankful heart. When one truly considers all that God has done, is doing and will do, heartfelt praise must be the result! Worship is all about Him because God is caring!

Thirdly, it is about God because **God is capable!** God's love wants to bless us; His wisdom knows how to bless us, and His power enables Him to bless us. God is capable! Paul reminded brothers and sisters in Philippi, "*But my God shall supply all your need according to riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19; cf., Ephesians 3:20). When we fail to recognize God's omnipotent nature, we fail to worship properly. **Sadly, far too many pews are filled with sleeping saints who have no idea how powerful God is!** The "Great I Am" is present, and yet, our worship is often merely ritual and less than spiritually stimulating. Those in Malachi's day forgot God's capability to the point that regarding worship, "*Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it...*" (Malachi 1:13a). Worship had become drudgery for them. What a picture of many congregations today. Worship is all about Him because God is capable!

God will **not** accept the "entitlement" mentality in worship. God is not concerned with what I like or prefer. He is the audience, and as such, we worship Him and Him alone (Matthew 4:10). When we worship, we ought to tremble because we are treading on Holy ground. The next time you approach God Almighty in worship, keep in mind, "*the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him*" (Habakkuk 2:20). Remember, it is not about you or me, but it's all about Him! 

Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher and the Associate Editor of *Gospel Gazette Online* magazine. He resides in Spencer, Wisconsin, USA.

GOD

Fresh Every Morning

Charles C. Pugh III

One of the joys of summertime is *fresh* garden vegetables. Fresh green beans, sliced tomatoes, cucumbers and sweetcorn; now there is as good a meal as there is! To me, the only thing to make it better would be some fresh fried okra, a pitcher of iced sweet tea and fresh blackberry cobbler!

When vegetables are fresh, they are better. They look better, taste better and are better for you. Fresh picked, that is when they are best. Thinking of such, I fondly recall a summertime experience I enjoyed with each of my three children as they were growing up. Each took his or her turn selling fresh sweetcorn during the months of July and August. Early every morning, I would travel to Belpre or Reedsville, Ohio and arrive just as the farmhands had returned from the fields with fresh-picked corn. I would load a day's supply for the kids to sell at their roadside stand in downtown Vienna, West Virginia, next to their grandmother's flower shop. It was a good summer job for the kids, and there was plenty of fresh sweetcorn anytime we wanted it for supper! Selling the corn was easy. It just had to be fresh—*fresh every morning*.

The Bible says, "*Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness*" (Lamentations 3:22-23). These words were written soon after the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.). The Book of *Lamentations* is the tearstained portrait of a once proud Jerusalem. It is the funeral of a city that was destroyed because of sin (Lamentations 1:9; 3:42; 5:16). However, in the midst of the ruins of the city, there was the affirmation of the Lord's mercies and compassions. God is good (Lamentations 3:25)! He will not cast off forever but will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies (Lamentations 3:31-32).


Paul said, "*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not lose heart*" (Galatians 6:9). The figure is that of the farm laborer succumbing in the field under the hot sun. He plows,

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plants, cultivates, fertilizes, fights the weeds, kills insects and counters drought. Under the hot sun, he is tempted to quit. Successful farming and gardening require constant toil and continued effort, no matter how hot it gets in the field or how great the temptation may be to quit.

Similarly, successful (i.e., faithful) Christian living demands **“patient continuance in doing good”** (Romans 2:7). Sometimes the heat in the field of service is intense. We may think we cannot plow another row, but we must remember that **“in due season, we shall reap if we do not lose heart”** (Galatians 6:9). **“Lose heart”** means “to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted” (Thayer 166, 195).

The “agriculture” of the Spirit (i.e., well doing, walking in the Spirit, living in the Spirit) takes our total energy and perseverance. The field may be hot, but we must plod onward—sowing, cultivating, watering and weeding. All of the work that is done under the hot July and August sun of life will be worth it for **“we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”** As Lenski says, “When the blessed harvest season arrives, we shall wonder why we ever thought of getting tired and of relaxing; to have waited a hundred times as long will then seem to us no reason at all for thinking of retiring” (310).

Whenever life goes stale, zeal cools, faith weakens and our spirit is dampened, the mercies and compassions of God are still there. They are **new (fresh) every morning**. We need to claim them daily (2 Corinthians 4:16) with the prayer. **“Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old”** (Lamentations 5:21). Heaven will surely be worth it all! 

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

GOD

The Prince of Peace

Russ Vickers

When we speak of wanting peace, we often feel as if there can be no peace in this old world. We think back to the time of Adam and Eve when peace on earth was a reality. However, sin took away that peace, and in its wake was conflict, sadness and death. It seems today that we have very little peace in this world—in families, communities, churches and between the nations.

In Isaiah 9:6, the Old Testament mentions the Messiah who is the *“Prince of Peace.”* A prince is a son of a king. Jesus was the Son of the Almighty King of all creation. He is expected to lead in government. We rejoice today because Jesus has assumed such leadership over the new spiritual kingdom, the church. Burton Coffman mentioned concerning this verse, “Jesus Christ is the only true Prince of Peace the world ever knew, and the only one that shall ever be” (Coffman, *Isaiah*, 97).

Jesus came to rid the world of sin and spiritual sickness. He came to make peace for us with the Father. Colossians 1:20 states, *“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”* The cross was the greatest example of self-sacrifice in history. Sin and rebellion separated man from God. To reconcile man to God, a perfectly obedient man had to be sacrificed to make possible the cancellation of the sins of all other men.

When we accept forgiveness from God, we must share that forgiveness with others. The plan of salvation is plain and easy to understand. Through it, we can have true peace in God. When we live in peace through our Savior’s blood and His Word, we are happy to make peace with others.

GOD

***Peace, Perfect Peace
In this dark world of sin.
The blood of Jesus
Whispers peace within.***



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Russ Vickers preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Baldwin, Mississippi, USA.

Standard Equipment

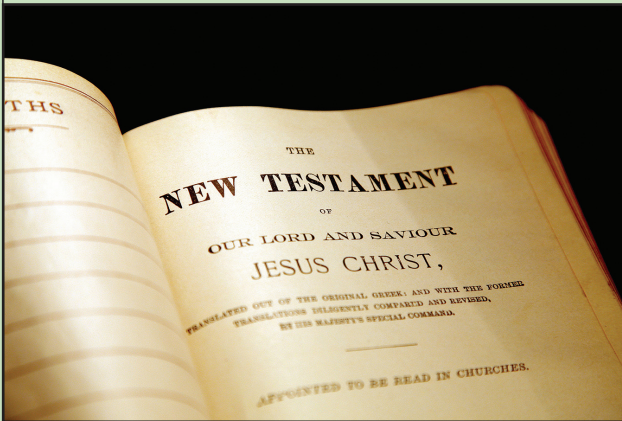
David Conley

In our lives, no matter what “baggage” we carry around, no matter what “equipment” we use and no matter what “things” are necessary, the Bible should always be considered ***standard equipment*** to us! It is the only book that meets the needs of man under all conditions.

Make the Bible a part of your life. Carry it, read it, study it and

live it! Don't let the Bible become an unused, unknown, undesired thing in your life as it has become in many people's lives today! 

David Conley is the pulpit minister of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.



EVIDENCES

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

David Everson

“Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she” (Job 39:26-30). As part of the lesson for Job, on how things came into being, God chose to include this passage on the “eagle.” This teaching includes a little about the nesting capability with which God designed this bird. When we look at the birds, we can witness many things that should lead to a renewed awe and reverence for God the Creator. Let’s look at just a few examples of what God has designed for these creatures and learn to glorify Him as our Creator as well.

The nest building ability of birds has marveled mankind for thousands of years. The methods, materials and location that they use to construct their nest are just about as varied as the birds themselves. The nest has one basic purpose, that of giving a place for the young to be raised. These structures can be huge and reused or rebuilt year after year as in the case of the eagles, hawks and most other raptors, or they can be small and inconspicuous—just barely able to hold a single egg as in the case of the lesser tree swift. The materials for the nests go from sticks, rocks and mud all the way to little other than the birds own saliva and feathers. It may include plant materials, manmade objects and even spider silk to help in the construction.

The tailorbird, a type of warbler found in Southeast Asia, uses its skills as sewers to construct their nest. Using a single leaf or two adjoining leaves, they begin by using spider silk to wrap around the leaf to pull the sides together. Then, they punch holes in the leaf margin using their beaks. After finding plant stems, bark fibers, cottony seed fibers or spider silk, they sew the “threads” through the holes and tease the ends into a ball

EVIDENCES


or crimp them so the two sides are “riveted” together rather than being “knotted.” These nests are almost impossible to find as they hang in the trees and look just like other leaves. It would be amazing if these animals had learned how to do that by “time and chance,” wouldn’t it?

The rufous ovenbird of South America constructs a strong complex, two-chambered mud nest on tree stumps and other projections. These structures, about the size of a football, have a domed entrance that leads through a chamber around to the inner lined chamber. The lesser tree swift nest is so small that the egg itself just barely fits inside. The mother and the baby—after hatching—must stand on the branch for support, and the baby does just fine after only a few hours.

The nests of many of the wren family of birds are dome shaped and are insulated with as many as 2,000 feathers from the mother’s body. They incorporate many very soft materials that allow the nest to



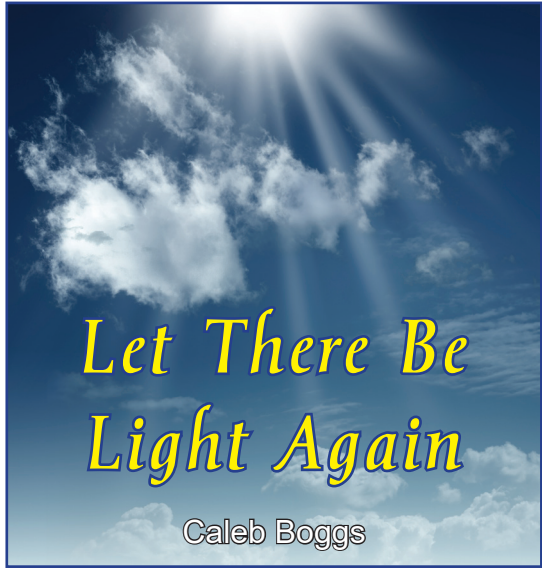
expand as the brood inside the cavity grows. This flexibility of the nest lets some of the natives of the African country where they live to use them as purses. The edible-nest swiftlets build their nests with nothing other than their own saliva, which hardens into a crusty, thin nest. These nests are collected and used for a traditional Chinese food, “bird’s nest soup.”

Indeed, as the psalmist noted, *“...the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young...”* (Psalm 84:3). We should look to the birds and see the incredible intelligence God has shown as He created the things around us. 

David Everson is a retired biology teacher and conducts creation science seminars. He is also an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD


“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). At the beginning of time, darkness enveloped the earth. Then, God spoke. He said, *“Let there be light,”* and thus was the dawning of creation (Genesis 1). Man was soon after formed in the image of God, but almost immediately, he fell into isolation and spiritual darkness (Genesis 3).



The rest of the Old Testament was spent in anticipation of a new light (Isaiah 9:1-7). Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4 that this light has now shined upon man. This light has illuminated the way back into the presence of the Father and signals the dawning of a new creation, a re-creation. This light is the Gospel!

To truly know the Gospel is to behold the glory of Christ, the perfect image of God. When we encounter the Lord’s glory, we *“are being transformed into the same image”* (2 Corinthians 3:18), *“are renewed day by day”* (4:16) and are being made into *“a new creation”* (5:17).

When did you last get to experience a sunrise? Early this morning, I saw the sunrise at a nearby state park, and it was magnificent. As dawn broke, sunlight encircled creation and reflected off the lake there. Nature sprang to life!

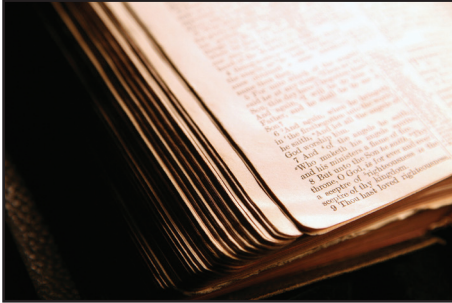
The Word of God is the light of life (John 1:1-5). As we step into the Gospel light and allow it to shine upon us, the image of God encases our being and reflects from our hearts. Light gives life, but only to those who choose to bask in it (John 8:12). 

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THE WORD OF GOD

The Bible: The World's True Wonder

Dalton Key




How many of the “seven wonders” of the ancient world can you name? The great pyramids of Egypt, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Statue of Zeus, the Temple of Artemis, the Mausoleum at Halacarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes and the lighthouse of Alexandria were heralded by the ancients as

“the seven wonders of the world.” For most of us, these past wonders have long since faded into the darkened shadows of obscure history. The seeming unforgettable has been forgotten.

Will our things, our monuments and our achievements be any better remembered by generations yet unborn? No. Time takes its toll upon all flesh. **“Because all flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away”** (1 Peter 1:24). **“And the world is passing away”** (1 John 2:17). Our more modern wonders will be pushed aside by our children’s children to make room for wonders of their own.

Is there nothing of substance? Is there nothing that will stand the test of time? Read on from 1 Peter 1:24. Take a close look at verse 25, which says, **“But the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.**” The incorruptible, never-failing, ever-living Word of God will stand throughout eternity, long after the marvels of men have been destroyed.

No wonder the wise man who both hears and obeys the words of Heaven is likened to a man who builds his house upon a rock (Matthew 7:25)! We have in the Word of God a rock, a bulwark for all eternity. God’s Word is the world’s true wonder. 

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

THE WORD OF GOD

Read and Obey Your Bible

Cecil May, Jr.

A “Bible class” in which each participant shares “what this verse means to me” can become an exercise in sharing ignorance rather than a learning experience.

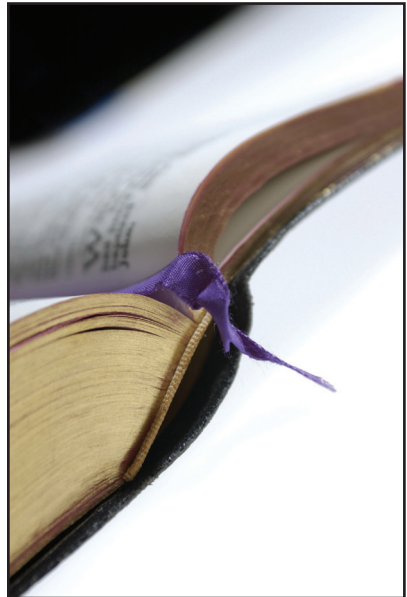
Someone must pull together and cite the Bible, correctly understood and applied. Private discussions of ethical and religious differences are worthless until someone points to a biblical principle or passage that speaks to the question at issue.

The principle is well stated by Balaam: *“If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the Lord speaks, that will I speak”* (Numbers 24:13). However, though Balaam **said** that just right, he did not want to **do** it right. He coveted Balak’s riches. He knew that pronouncing a curse the Lord Himself had not pronounced would do him no good, but he kept rationalizing, following Balak along, until he figured out a way to entice

Israel to sin and thus bring a curse on themselves.

A religious discussion is not settled until (1) the Bible is correctly cited and (2) the parties to the discussion accept and do what God says. ✚

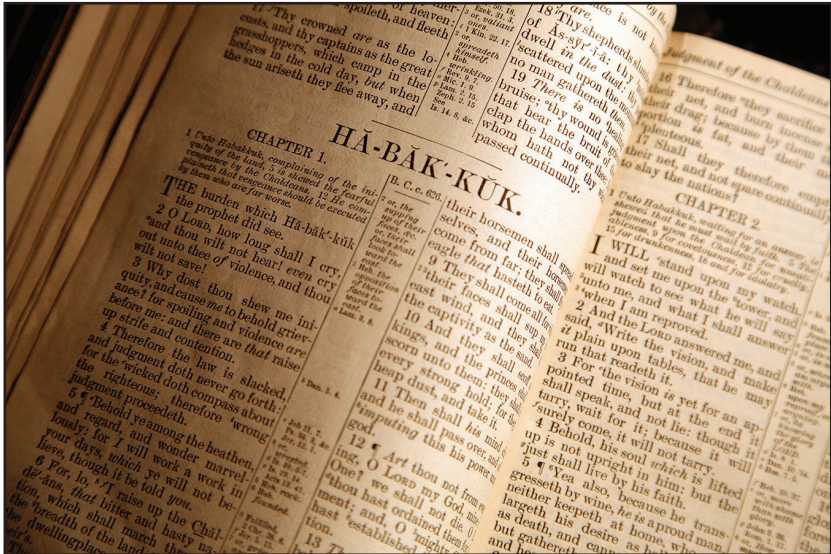
Cecil May, Jr. is Dean-Emeritus of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.



THE WORD OF GOD

Ignoring the Word of God

Lydia Todd



In all of our houses, we have that one drawer we never open. For some, it contains batteries or screwdrivers, or for me, it's the cabinet where we keep my dad and brother's glasses cleaners. We might describe this drawer as strange, small, not important, unused or even dusty.

Did you know the Bible also has a forgotten drawer? Of course, there are some Bible drawers used more than others. Can you quote John 3:16? What about summarizing Genesis 1?

Can anyone tell me what the Book of Haggai is about? I say this with love, but **why not?** Why have many Christians gone their entire lives without ever opening to Zechariah or to Jude unless a preacher mentioned it in his sermon?

These books, just like Romans and Proverbs, were God-breathed words (2 Timothy 3:16). This alone—being the Word of God—should be enough to

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make them worth studying. Haggai and Jude are two of the books considered minor, but minor means short—not unimportant. The same is for the chronology chapters and even Paul’s greetings at the beginning of his books.

What can you learn from these short books? While small, they contain messages from which even we today can draw important lessons.

In Haggai, God’s people were failing to rebuild the Temple, making many excuses. Haggai 1:2 reads, *“This speaks the Lord of Hosts, saying ‘This people says, The time has not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built’”* (NKJV). Notice, **the people** claimed it was just not the time to build the Temple; they could wait till later. However, that’s not what the Lord wanted. In verses 3-4, it says, *“Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ‘Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?’”* The Lord, through Haggai, sent a message to His people that by not rebuilding the Temple, **they were in ruins**. He continued, saying:

Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways!” (Haggai 1:5-7)

Repeatedly, God asked His people, just as I’m asking you now, to *“consider your ways.”* All they did—eating, drinking, sowing—was not enough because they refused to obey His commands. **They were living under the burden of unfulfilled duty to their Lord.** Are we also ignoring the Word of the Lord by choosing bits and pieces to study when we see fit? Why would we not want to read all of Scripture, even just for a greater glimpse at the awesomeness of our Creator?

Please don’t take this message as me saying you must read the *entire* Bible every time you sit to study; what I am saying is that *any word* God thought was important enough to give us is important enough for me to read at least once in my studies. I hope this encourages you to spend more time in every corner of God’s Word. **Dust off those smaller drawers!** 

Lydia Todd is a teenage Christian girl who is a member of the Rutherford Church of Christ and lives in Yorkville, Tennessee, USA.

How to Become a Christian

Royce Frederick

Infants and little children have no sins (Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 18:1-4; 19:14). They are not able to understand the differences between right and wrong, good and evil.

As each person grows older, a time comes when he or she begins to understand right and wrong. When a person chooses to do what is wrong (what is against the will of God), he “sins.” There is no man or woman on earth who has lived a totally sinless life. ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:23).

Sin separates us from God. ***“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear”*** (Isaiah 59:1-2). Unless the guilt of a man’s sins is removed while he is living on earth, his soul will suffer eternal punishment and separation from God forever (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48). The Bible uses the word “death” to describe this punishment. ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”*** (Romans 6:23).

God wants us to be free from sin so we can have fellowship with Him. No man can remove his own sins. ***“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:8). Jesus Christ lived a totally sinless, righteous life. Therefore, He was the only acceptable sacrifice for our sins. He was innocent, but He took our place, suffering death on the cross for our sins. ***“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit”*** (1 Peter

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3:18). How can a person receive the benefit of the death of Jesus Christ?

Hear The sinner must hear the Gospel. The word “gospel” means “good news.” Jesus has *“...brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”* (2 Timothy 1:10). The Gospel includes the facts about the birth, life, death, resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.

Believe The sinner must believe in Jesus Christ. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). In this verse, *“believes in Him”* does not mean it is enough if we merely agree in our mind that Jesus is the Son of God. If a person believes in Christ in his own mind, but never obeys Christ, that person will still be lost. *“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”* (John 12:42-43). Our belief (faith) in Christ will save us, but only when it is obedient faith.

Repent The sinner must repent of his sins. “Repentance” is a change of mind. It is a **decision** to turn from sin and turn toward righteousness. The Lord is *“...longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

Confess The sinner who has repented should confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In the very first Gospel sermon after the resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, Peter said, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:36). We should confess our faith in Christ, *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10). The Ethiopian eunuch confessed, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:37).


Be baptized When a sinner has heard the Gospel, believed, repented and confessed, he must then be baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of his sins. *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). The word “baptize” means

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“immerse.” Baptism is a “burial” in water. Writing to people who had already obeyed the Gospel, Paul said, **“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”** (Romans 6:3-4). The sinner goes into the water, allows someone to briefly “bury” him in the water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins, and then he is lifted out of the water. If he has **“obeyed from the heart”** (Romans 6:17), his sins are forgiven by the grace of God. He is now a Christian, a child of God! †

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

Robison's Rubies



In the Old Testament, people got in serious trouble for not obeying God’s laws in specificity. Nadab and Abihu offered fire which the Lord had not commanded them, and they were struck dead (Leviticus 10:1-2). God does not punish immediately like that anymore. Nevertheless, the Judgment Day is coming, and the Bible teaches that those who reject Christ’s ways in this era will receive sorer punishment than those who disobeyed under the Old Covenant (Hebrews 2:1-4).

I just want to be right with God, don’t you? I’ll never earn my way to Heaven by obedience, but obedience is still required (Hebrews 5:8-9). I’m reminded often of the simple scriptural statement, **“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). With the God of grace forgiving sins, we should want to do all we can to obey and serve Him.

SALVATION

Christ Is the Author of Salvation to All Who Obey Him

Sunny David

Many in the world believe that one is saved by faith alone, without any act of obedience. Most preachers teach that all one has to do to be saved by the blood of Christ is to accept Jesus as one's personal Savior. It is said that "the doctrine of faith and faith alone is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." Whereas the Bible teaches, Jesus Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. To obey means, "to do what one is told or expected to do." Speaking about Christ, the Bible says, ***"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"*** (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Notice, He was a Son, the only begotten of the Father (John 1:18). One would have thought this might have exempted Him from obedience, but it did not. By His

suffering, He was made perfect, and He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The salvation Christ accomplished for humanity by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8), is actually bestowed on none but on those who obey Him, and not on those who merely believe in Christ and accept Him as their personal Savior (James 2:24). It is not sufficient that one has some doctrinal knowledge of Christ, or that one makes a profession of faith in Him, but to be saved, one must hear what He says and obey Him. Hasn't Christ said, ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved..."*** (Mark 16:16)?

Did Christ say, "He who believes in Me and accepts Me as personal savior will be saved"? No, He didn't say that. Neither Christ nor His apostles taught such a thing anywhere in the Bible. Those

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who teach, believe and accept the doctrine of salvation by faith only will find themselves on the day of Judgment in the company of those to whom Christ will say, ***“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”*** (Matthew 7:23).

What is lawlessness? Disobeying the law of Christ is lawlessness. Christ has a law. His New Testament is His law that He gave through His apostles (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Matthew 18:18). ***“But why do you call Me Lord, Lord,”*** asked Jesus, ***“and not do the things which I say?”*** (Luke 6:46). To whom should one listen, to a preacher or to Christ, the Savior? Salvation, remission or forgiveness of sin comes after, and not before, one is baptized into Christ, according to Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:3-4.

There are those who use Abraham as an example and believe that the apostle Paul in Romans 4:1-3 taught that justification is by faith alone, without works of any kind. Yet, James penned, ***“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac, his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was***

made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:21-23).

James was not contradicting Paul. In Romans 4, the apostle was simply stating the fact, quoting from Genesis 15:6, which says, Abraham ***“believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”*** Whereas James showed **when** Abraham’s faith was accounted to him for righteousness. It was when he offered Isaac his son on the altar. It is vitally important to observe that though Abraham was acknowledged as a believer and his faith was reckoned for righteousness, it was not until he had obeyed God that his faith was consummated or made perfect in the act of his obedience. God tested respecting the command involving his only son Isaac, whom God had asked Abraham to offer as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:1-13). When Abraham obeyed God’s command, we read that God said to him, ***“Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me”*** (Genesis 22:12).

The inference is, if God had

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already justified Abraham on the basis of his faith or “faith only,” as some teach, then there could have been no reason whatever for God testing his faith. The fact is, Abraham was not justified till he passed the test. He not only believed God, but he also obeyed God’s command to be justified. This shows that it is absolutely wrong to suppose that any person could be saved merely upon alleged faith or trust only without meeting any test whatever.

The test is, as Christ said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Also, why should it be considered a strange thing that Abraham’s faith should have been *“made perfect”* by his works of obedience to God’s command, when the Bible clearly declares that even the Son of God Himself was *“made perfect through obedience”* (Hebrews 5:8-9; Philippians 2:8-9). God by His grace allowed Jesus to taste death on the cross for everyone (Hebrews 2:9), which our Lord gladly did (Matthew 26:39; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He is the propitiation for sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Jesus Christ is the source of salvation to

all, but this salvation is given only to those who obey Him. †

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a Hindi-speaking TV evangelist and an elder for the Lord’s church.

Kenney’s Pennies

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”

(James 5:16 NKJV). It seems like there was a day when people requested public prayers for forgiveness more frequently. Are we better today than yesterday? I seriously doubt that. Hopefully the reason is **not** the fear that our brothers and sisters in Christ will not truly forgive us.

David Kenney is the preacher for the Wadsworth Church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA.



WHO AM I?

Sherry Townsend

1. I am a woman who was very intelligent and beautiful in appearance (1 Samuel 25:2). **100**
2. My husband was a harsh descendant of Caleb (1 Samuel 25:3). **90**
3. My husband was very rich and had a business in Carmel (1 Samuel 25:2). **80**



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

4. My husband owned 3,000 sheep that he was shearing in Carmel (1 Samuel 25:2). **70**
5. David sent servants to my husband to request provisions (1 Samuel 25:5-8). **60**
6. My husband refused to give David any provisions (1 Samuel 25: 3). **50**
7. Nabal was the name of my husband (1 Samuel 25:3). **40**
8. I took bread, wine, sheep, grain and figs to David without telling Nabal (1 Samuel 25:18-19). **30**
9. The provisions I sent prevented David from bloodshed against my husband (1 Samuel 25:33). **20**
10. I received a proposal of marriage from David after the death of Nabal, and I became one of his wives (Samuel 25:39, 43). **10**

My Score: _____

Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16

Jerry Bates

1. _____ me, just as I also _____ Christ. (v. 1)
2. Why did Paul praise the Corinthians? (v. 2)
3. Who is the head of every man? (v. 3)
4. Who is the head of Christ? (v. 3)
5. Paul said that if a man prayed with his head covered, that dishonored his head. Who would he dishonor? (v. 5)
6. Alternatively, Paul said that if a woman prayed with her head uncovered that dishonored her head. Who would she dishonor? (v. 5)
7. Man is the _____ of God, but woman is the _____ of man. (v. 7)
8. For whom was the woman created? (v. 9)
9. In Christ, all men and women are equal and therefore completely independent of one another. (v. 11) True False
10. Paul stated that even _____ taught that it was a dishonor for a man to have long hair. (v. 13)
11. What two things did Paul state that a woman's hair was to herself? (v. 15)
12. Were the churches to be contentious regarding length of hair? (v. 16)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. **2** Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. **3** But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. **4** Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. **5** But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. **6** For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. **7** For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. **8** For man is not from woman, but woman from man. **9** Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. **10** For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. **11** Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. **12** For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. **13** Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? **14** Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? **15** But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. **16** But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

NOTES: In this section, Paul discussed an issue that is often debated today in many cultures. The question is, “Should a woman pray with her head covered today?” The principle is that a woman should be in subjection to her husband. In whatever way this is indicated in her culture, then that is how she should dress and behave. In the first century, the wearing of the head covering indicated her subjection; therefore, Paul admonished the woman to wear the covering. However, in many cultures today, the wearing of a covering does not indicate that, and therefore it could be removed. There is nothing in these verses that indicates the covering was commanded by God for all ages and for all cultures.

Another question involves the inferiority of woman to man. Many think that since the woman is subject to the man, this means she is inferior to the man. Subjection does not mean inferiority, because Christ is subject to God, but He is not inferior. Christ and God are equally divine, and man and woman are equal human beings. However, men and women have different roles of service to God, just as God and Christ have different roles in regards to man’s salvation.

What Will Build a Strong Church?

Maxie B. Boren




Not sensationalism! Not gimmicks! Not more committees, mere programs or a “fun and games” emphasis! These things may be “right-on” for civic clubs, social clubs and country clubs, but not for the Lord’s church! What does it take to build a strong church? I believe with all my heart that the following things are essential!

- **Strong Bible preaching and teaching!** God’s Word, when it is disseminated plainly, forcefully, uncompromisingly and yet kindly, will **build up!** Paul said, *“I commend you unto God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up...”* (Acts 20:32).

THE CHURCH

- **Exemplary leadership!** Men who make themselves *“examples to the flock”* and who are careful in tending it (1 Peter 5:2-3) will build a strong church. To grow, the church must have quality leadership—men who know how to lead and will do so!
- **Christian living on the part of every member!** Unimpeachable conduct clearly evidenced in the lives of Christians will illuminate the way for many in the realm of darkness (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15).
- **Congregational warmth and love!** The fellowship of the Lord’s church should be so sweet and precious that the whole community takes notice and observes, “See how they love each other!” Without this, a congregation will never be what God would have it to be!
- **Compassionate hearts!** The church of Christ needs to be known as the most tender-hearted bunch of people in all the world, ready and willing to help all, but especially those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:9-10).
- **Evangelistic fervor!** The emphasis of the early church was soul-winning! The church will grow when we cease not to *“teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ”* every day, wherever we have opportunity (Acts 5:42)!
- **An “I want to serve” attitude permeating the congregation!** People serving the Lord because they love Him, and they want to serve—and not out of a spirit of drudgery—will build a strong church.
- **An atmosphere of happiness, friendliness, cordiality and hospitality!** No stranger should ever come into the midst of the Lord’s church without being graciously greeted and welcomed by a happy, friendly membership! We must reach out to others and not just “visit” with friends only.

It is my conviction that these ingredients will build a strong church! I pray fervently that all eight points will become a reality in every congregation more than ever before! 

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

THE CHURCH

CATCHING FISH AND FEEDING SHEEP


John Gipson

“I am going fishing,” said Simon Peter. Nothing startling here. Before meeting Jesus, Peter was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. He was no novice. Catching fish was second nature to him; no one had to explain to him the best procedure to follow. It had been his lifetime work. Therefore, when Peter announced his intention to go fishing, several of the disciples said, *“We are going with you also”* (John 21:3).

Have you ever been on a fishing trip that was unsuccessful? You’re not alone. It happened to Peter and his friends. They stayed out all night and caught nothing. Weary and ready to give up, they heard a man on the beach shout, *“Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some”* (John 21:6). Some? They were not able to haul the net in because there were so many. John sensed the truth first, *“It is the Lord!”* (John 21:7). In a moment, Peter was out of the boat and swimming to the Lord.

It had been some three years since Peter and his brothers heard the call of Jesus, *“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”* (Matthew 4:19).

Then, sitting around a charcoal fire and enjoying the breakfast Jesus had prepared, Peter was given another commission: *“Feed my sheep”* (John 21:15-17).

The business of the kingdom involves both catching fish and feeding sheep. Jesus plainly said before He ascended into Heaven, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age”* (Matthew 28:18-20). 

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

THE CHURCH

Together on Earth, Together in Eternity

Dale Grissom

The writer of Hebrews admonished the saints in the early church, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25). It is very important for brethren to assemble together to worship God and to fellowship with each another. When we regularly gather together, we partake of a spiritual food that is essential to our spiritual growth. When we fail to feed on the Word, to worship and to fellowship with one another, we become weak and in danger of dying spiritually.

Christians are the family of God, and, like our earthly families, we need each other. We are a special people, and as such, we should enjoy being together. *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another”* (Romans 12:10). It is only natural that we should grow to love and to cherish our spiritual family while living on earth, for we are destined to be together for eternity in Heaven.

We may occasionally hear someone declare, “I don’t need anyone.” This is the wrong attitude to have about life, and the person who makes such a statement may be hiding his loneliness behind the appearance of independence. Just as others are affected by our lives, we are affected by others. We need people in our lives—people to love, especially within our spiritual family. We need to know the joy of brotherly love and friendship. The best way to achieve such a relationship is by faithfully growing together with our church family in love, friendship and in the knowledge of the Word of God.

Life is so short—far too short—to live a life separated from our spiritual family and the special blessings that relationship offers. May we all endeavor to live closer to the Lord and cleave to Him, walking as far from the world as we can. Let us remain faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10), always striving for that crown of life the Lord has promised. ✝

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

THE CHURCH

If the Church of Christ Will Be Truly Udenominational

Neal Pollard

The Restoration Plea is valid, vital and victorious! It urges every believer in Christ to throw off the shackles of humanly-devised traditions and beliefs that undermine and contradict the sole, supreme authority of Christ. Religious division has been spawned through time because of men's preference for their own creeds and doctrines. Reason and rationale becomes, "We've always done this" or "We prefer this" rather than ***"Thus saith the Lord!"*** With human nature, we are often prone to see such faulty thinking in others while being blinded to our own potential guilt. This happens to us individually, and it certainly can happen to us collectively. Painfully aware of my own limitations and shortcomings, may I offer some cautions to us out of a sincere love of Christ and His glorious bride?

If the church of Christ will truly be udenominational:

- We must build our faith and beliefs **from the "text out"** rather than assert our beliefs and then find verses to support them.
- We must avoid blind loyalty to any individual, congregation, school, work and the like.
- We must determine not to press our inclinations, preferences, judgments and opinions to the extent that they divide brethren or become matters of fellowship.
- We must strive to preach and practice ***"the whole counsel of God,"*** even in unpopular matters or those we may have neglected (e.g., church discipline, evangelism, marriage-divorce-and-remarriage, moral purity, first-century-like benevolence, etc.).
- We must be patient and loving within and toward other congregations, be they Thessalonicas or Corinths.
- We must avoid unconditionally venerating and idolizing men above the Lord.

THE CHURCH

- We must repent of our intensely “in-reach” philosophy and rededicate ourselves to intense “outreach” in our communities.
- We must avoid convenient silence in our pulpits and classrooms regarding New Testament distinctiveness and doctrine.
- We must increase our faith in the absolute, unqualified Lordship of Jesus.

This list is inevitably incomplete and imperfect. How could it not be, since it was compiled by one who is certainly both of those things? Yet, it is put forward to emphasize that there is an urgent need for us to continually examine our beliefs and practices, making sure our allegiance is to the Christ and not to men—however great and noble they seem to us. Our Lord said, *“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day”* (John 12:48). †

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Kenney's Pennies



“But ‘he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’ For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends”
(2 Corinthians 10:17-18 NKJV). Letting your Christian light shine before others is not commending yourself.

Letting your Christian light shine before others is allowing others to see the glory of Christ by your light (life). Sometimes, we may be tempted to throw gas on the fire to make sure people see us, which is why Paul wrote this admonition to caution us not to get burned by our self-aggrandizement.



Bible Find

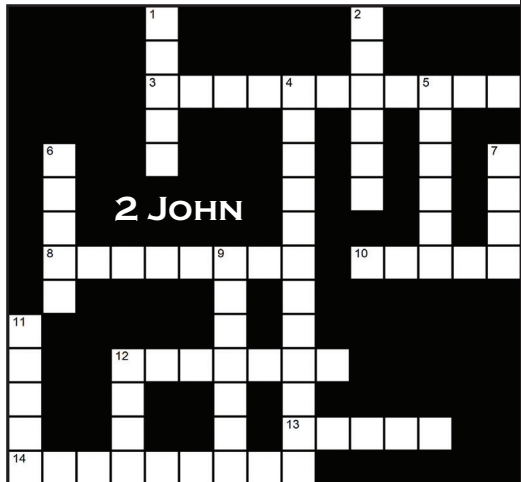
Martha Rushmore

ACROSS

3. Those coming in the flesh are what? (v. 7)
8. It was also written to the elect lady's _____. (v. 1)
10. One thing from God and Jesus. (v. 3)
12. The truth will abide in us for how long? (v. 2)
13. John found some children walking in what? (v. 4)
14. Those coming in the flesh are what? (v. 7)

DOWN

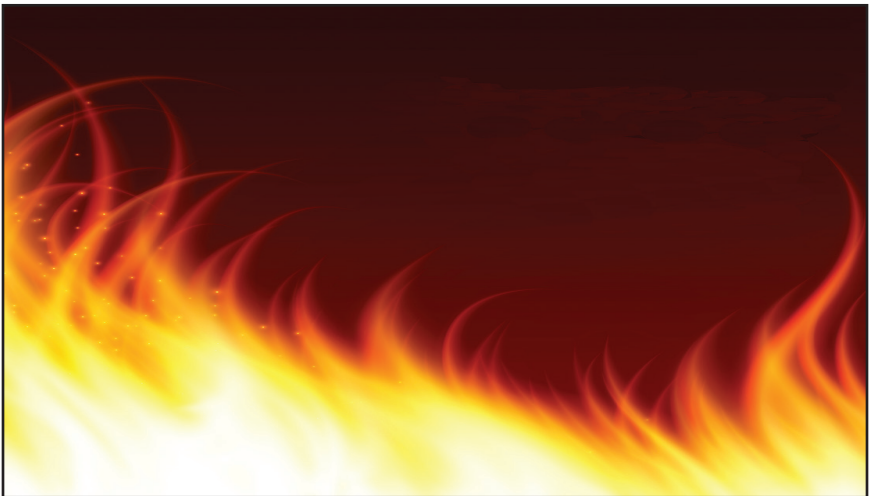
1. One thing from God and Jesus. (v. 3)
2. Transgressors do not abide in the doctrine of _____. (v. 9)
4. According to what does love walk? (v. 6)
5. John said they were greeted by the elect _____. (v. 13)
6. One thing from God and Jesus. (v. 3)
7. First John was written to the elect _____. (v. 1)
9. What are we not to do if someone does not bring us the Gospel of Christ? (v. 10)
11. Where have many deceivers gone? (v. 7)
12. How did John want to see these brethren? (v. 12)



IF THERE IS NO **HELL**,
CAN THERE BE A PLACE
CALLED **HEAVEN**?

Raymond Elliott


Now, think with me. If there is no hell, then I cannot believe in the Bible because hell is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures as being a real place. Further, if the Bible is not reliable, God did not create the heavens and the earth as claimed in Genesis One. Neither can I believe in God even though the Bible states that *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”* (2 Timothy 3:16). Additionally, I cannot believe in the Holy Spirit, regardless of what the apostle Peter wrote, *“knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2:20-21). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 that what he had received and spoke was from the “Holy Spirit.”



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

If there is not a place called hell, how can I believe in the one who mentioned hell more than any other person in the Bible? Did you know that the word “hell” (Greek, *Gehenna*) is found 12 times in the New Testament? In the book of James, we read that the *“tongue is set on fire by hell”* (3:6). Eleven times you will find the word *“hell”* mentioned in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke. You will find expressions like, *“hell fire”* (Matthew 5:22); *“eternal fire”* (Matthew 18:8); *“son of hell”* (Matthew 23:15). Do you know who used the word “hell” and these expressions? **It was Jesus Christ!** If there is not a place called hell, how can I believe in the person called Jesus Christ, because He often spoke of that terrible place!

If we do not believe in Jesus Christ when He spoke about hell, how can we trust Him when He said, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this”* (John 11:25-26)? He also made the beautiful and precious promise in John 14:1-3: *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* Then, there is that final and grand invitation extended to all who have believed in Him and have given their lives to Him: *“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’”* (Matthew 25:34).

My friends, can you not understand the fatal and final results of such illogical reasoning by rejecting the biblical truth that teaches there is a terrible place call hell? Thanks be to God that He is, that the Holy Spirit inspired the writings of the Holy Scriptures and that Jesus Christ died for our sins so we can be saved. By His grace, we have the precious promise of being with all the redeemed in Heaven when this life is over. God does not desire that anyone should die and go to the awful place called **HELL** (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). 

Raymond Elliott is a preacher of the Gospel, living in Prattville, Alabama, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

SOUND DOCTRINE

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).
“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).
“Hold fast the form of sound words...” (2 Timothy 1:13).


Give book, chapter and verse.
Do Bible things in Bible ways.
Call Bible things by Bible names.

WE SHOULD NOT SAY:

WE SHOULD SAY:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. “Church of Christ people” | “Christians, God’s children
(Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16) |
| 2. “Church of Christ doctrine” | “Bible doctrine, truth”
(2 John 9-11; John 8:32) |
| 3. “the Church of Christ teaches” | “the Bible teaches”
(Galatians 1:6-9) |
| 4. “the authority of the Church” | “the authority of Christ”
(Matthew 28:18-20) |
| 5. “He is a Church of Christ” | “He is a Christian—a member of the
body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) |
| 6. “He is a Church of Christer” | “He is a Christian” |
| 7. “I am teaching him our
position” | “We are studying God’s Word,
what the Lord teaches. |
| 8. “The Church of Christ is right in
all points of doctrine and practice” | “The Bible is right ,and we are making
an effort to conform to its teaching.” |
| 9. “giving to the Church” | “giving to the Lord” |
| 10. “quitting the Church” | “quitting the Lord” |
| 11. “join the church to be saved” | “Obey the Gospel and be added
to the church (2 Thessalonians 1:7-
9; Acts 2:47) |

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

12. “Our church; my church” “the Lord’s church”
(Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16)
13. “Church of Christ church” “church of Christ, the Lord’s church”
(Colossians 1:24)
14. “vote him into the church” “The Lord added him to the church” (Acts 2:47)
15. “Reverend So-N-So” “Christ warns against exalting titles” (Matthew 23:4-12; cf., Psalm 111:9)
16. “Father So-N-So” “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven (Matthew 23:9). 

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11). When the Gospel truly lives and breathes in our lives:

**The world will hate us.
Some will criticize us.
Others will persecute us.
A few will follow us.
God will love and delight in us.**

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Abraham's Justification

T. Pierce Brown

Most of the writing we have seen by our brethren on this subject over the past 40 years dealt primarily with the fact that James and Paul were not contradicting each other, though Paul teaches justification by faith and James teaches justification by works. Paul nowhere even implies that we are justified at the point of faith or by faith alone. Nor does James suggest that the good works a man may do are the grounds for his justification or that it was not based on his faith. In fact, he specifically affirms the necessity of faith demonstrated by obedience. In our judgment, this aspect of the subject has been well covered by our brethren.

The reasoning has been something like this: Abraham was justified (declared to be just) when he offered his son on the altar (James 2:21). This shows that *“faith without works is dead,”* and that faith was perfected by obedience (James 2:20). The principle is true in **our** justification (salvation from past sins). We trust in God, but until that trust leads us to obey God in baptism, we are not justified by our faith.

The reasoning is true, and the conclusion is valid. However, it seems to me that there is an additional truth that needs to be emphasized. Moses, Paul and James were not talking about Abraham being saved from his past sins and being translated into a different kingdom or a relationship as in the case of an alien sinner today. We have heard it discussed in such a way as to make it almost sound as if Abraham got forgiveness of his sins by offering Isaac on the altar! The impression may be left that up to that time Abraham was out of fellowship with God—as an alien sinner—and when he offered his son he was justified—forgiven, as a man is forgiven at the point of baptism!

We judge this to be an erroneous concept. It is similar, in our judgment, to using Noah’s case to try to prove that Noah would have gone to hell if he had died before the flood. After all, does not the Bible plainly say that he *“prepared an ark to the saving of his house”* (Hebrews 11:7)? Doesn’t Peter plainly tell us *“Noah was saved by water, the like figure whereunto baptism saves us”* (1 Peter 3:21)? Certainly so, but Noah was not saved from his sins by the ark, nor by the flood, but his physical salvation is a

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

type or figure of our salvation from sins at the point of baptism.

We can properly use him as an excellent illustration of the necessity of an **obedient** faith. *“Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he”* (Genesis 6:22). We may properly conclude that if he had not used gopher wood, or had substituted his will for God’s will, he would have been displeasing to God. We may **not** properly conclude that Noah was out of fellowship with God before the ark was built, and the building of the ark, entering it or the flood somehow washed his sin away and justified him in the same sense the alien sinner is justified from his past sins at baptism.

The real point is that **each step along the way**, Abraham was justified by faith. Note carefully: When all God required Abraham to do was **trust**, then Abraham stood in the right relationship with God (was justified) when he obeyed **that** command and trusted. When God required Abraham to **act** on his faith, his faith could not be reckoned unto him for righteousness until he **acted**.

In Genesis 15:6 we find, *“And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.”* This does not prove that Abraham was lost until this time, nor does the fact that James 2:23 says, *“the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness”* mean that God in some fashion and for some reason held Abraham’s sins against him until he offered his son but reckoned him righteous from then on! The truth of the matter is that at every point where God commanded and Abraham had enough faith to obey, he stood justified—counted to be righteous—in the right relationship with God.

There is no difference in the policy stated by the Lord in Exodus 23:7, *“I will not justify the wicked”* and in Romans 4:5 where he *“justifies the ungodly.”* He never did and does not now justify the ungodly **in the practice** of their ungodliness. Adulterers, liars and murderers have to quit their wickedness. They are still ungodly in the sense that they are not righteous through their own law keeping. So, they are forgiven through their faith in Jesus, as they demonstrate that faith in obedience.

The fact that Genesis 15:6 says, *“He believed God and he counted it to him for righteousness,”* in no wise suggests that he had not believed God before, nor that he was not in **every previous** or subsequent case *“justified”* when he thus trusted in God. If we conceive of “justification” as a **once-for-all** judicial act in which God takes away our past sins, then we become


DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

confused. Instead, we understand that when God said in Genesis 12:1, *“Get thee out”* and he in faith obeyed, he was justified (Hebrews 11:8). When God said in Genesis 15:1-5 that he would have a son, and Abraham believed Him, he was justified (Romans 4:3). When he said in Genesis 22:2, *“Take now thy son—and offer him for a burnt offering”* and he had enough faith to obey, he was justified (James 1:21). At **any** and every point in his life, he was justified by his faith. Note carefully: When asked to **accept a statement**, no matter how difficult to believe, he trusted God, and he stood approved of God **at that point**. When asked to **obey a command**, and he in faith obeyed that command, he stood approved of God **at that point**.

The same principle applies to us. We must understand that “justification” does not always refer to an alien sinner having his sins removed. When Jesus said in Matthew 12:37, *“by thy word thou shalt be justified,”* he did not mean that if somehow the alien sinner says the right words, he will be saved (justified) from his past sins!

Just as in Abraham’s case, if God says, *“Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins”* (Acts 2:38) and a man replies, “I do not intend to do that. I will get remission by praying,” he will **not** be justified or get remission of his sins. On the other hand, when Simon heard Peter say, *“Repent and pray...”* (Acts 8:22), if Simon had said, “No, I must be baptized again,” he would not have been justified.

When God asks me to believe that the same Jesus who was crucified and resurrected will come back for His saints, I stand in the right relationship with God (justified) when I **trust** in His word. When He asks me to partaker of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week as a **demonstration** of my faith in that, I do **not** stand in the right relationship with God (justified) if I refuse to do it. The fact that I was justified **from my sins** when I accepted His grace in obedient faith by being baptized for the remission of sins does not mean I stay justified in **any** disobedient act.

There is no comfort in God’s Word for the man who **assumes** he can be justified **at any point without doing** what God says do. If God says, “Trust and **wait**,” then one must do that. If God says, “Trust and **act**,” then one must do that. It has always been so. 

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

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses (Hebrews 12:5-11)

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Does God Spank His Children?

The tendency among humans is to bemoan any negative that comes into our lives. In line with that thinking, too many parents in today's world are reluctant to say “No” to their children or to discipline them. The wise man's admonition in Proverbs 23:13 is becoming a thing of the past.

Yet, what does God say about discipline and correction? He states very clearly that—since humans are prone to err, in spite of trying to live pleasing lives to God—when we need correction, He will administer it because He loves us as a devoted Father. How will we grow in spiritual strength if we never have to wait and even struggle toward reaching a worthy goal? How will we see that thinking which seemed right to us was actually not the way God would have us to see things if we did not have an obstacle placed in our way?

We grow in wisdom as we are guided by God's carefully administered correction. We grow in spiritual strength as we endure what God allows Satan to bring. Ultimately, our devoted Father uses what was intended to hurt us and makes it a perfect tool to strengthen us in Him!

Teacher's Activity Bag

Bonnie Rushmore

Not every Christian can go overseas to teach others about God. Financial and family responsibilities, personality makeup and physical capacities hinder some from making trips beyond one's home environment. However, we still have the responsibility to take the Gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20). Some go and others assist those going with financial and moral support.

God expects all Christians to serve Him with the abilities and opportunities available to them (Matthew 25:15-30). Ephesians 4:11-15 teaches that each Christian has a responsibility to grow in Christ and has various responsibilities in service to God. Thus, we learn that every Christian has a job to do, but no Christian can do everything. We need to evaluate our talents and put those talents to work serving God.

On our recent trip to India and Myanmar, I became aware of a great need within the local congregations. The Christians there do not have the resources, and many times, they do not have the training to teach children's Bible classes. Some missionaries have included lessons on how to teach a children's class in the Ladies' classes, but the resources to teach are not readily available.

To assist each lady willing to teach a children's class, it has been suggested that we encourage ladies' classes, teen girls' classes or other groups looking for a service project, above what the local congregation is already doing, to prepare **Teacher Activity Bags** for disbursement overseas. Included in each bag:


1. A large Bible Story book
2. A Bible Story coloring book with simple pictures
3. A pack of thin paper for tracing pictures from the coloring book
4. A pack of crayons
5. Fine tip markers
6. Simple children's Bible songs that teach a lesson; type on paper and if possible record on CD-Rom or USB thumb drive

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

7. Bible Story flip charts (laminated) to teach the lessons
8. A typed list of items in the bag; include the titles and texts for lessons taught on the flip charts



All of the above items should be inserted into a large canvas tote bag for easy transport overseas and for use by the local sisters. When making the flipcharts, please remember that English is not the first language in India and Myanmar, and some of the ladies do not speak any English. Keep all wording short and simple and the pictures easily discernable. Include printouts of Scripture references.

On our next trip, I plan to prepare several lessons on the importance of and how to teach a children's Bible class. Providing a teacher's activity bag to each interested lady at the conclusion of those lessons would be a wonderful bonus. If you want to participate in this opportunity to reach out to the lost souls across the world... 

Bonnie Rushmore (1956-2015) succumbed to pancreatic cancer three years ago. She was devoted to teaching women and children throughout the USA and the world. In addition, she was a Staff Writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and an author of ladies' class books. Her good works follow her (Revelation 14:13), and though dead, she still speaks (Hebrews 11:4).

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IF

Martha Lynn Rushmore

“If” is such a small word, but it is one of the *biggest* words in the English language. “If” is such a big word because of the consequences that may follow our decisions and actions. We must really think before opening our mouths. Sometimes we say things we do not really mean, but depending on with whom we may be, we go ahead and do what we have said just to save face in front of peers. We surely do not want to be made fun of by our equals or our friends.

Another thing we do with the word “if” is that we go back in time and wonder if I had done this or if I had done that, things might have been different in our lives. They may have been different, but these same things we are talking about might have come out a whole lot worse. Sometimes we as parents say, “I wish I could go back and do things differently with rearing my children.” Would we really want to go back in time? We probably would have made the same mistakes that we made the first time.

We hear people say all the time, “If I only had a million dollars, I would do this or that.” Why can we not do some little thing to do good? Why does it always have to be a great thing to help those in need? Jesus said that just a cup of water in His name is a worthwhile deed (Matthew 10:42).

Are we like Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-19? He had leprosy, and the little maid told him of Elisha, the prophet of God in Samaria. So, Naaman got ready and left for Samaria. He must have thought Elisha would have him do something great. Elisha sent his servant to Naaman and told him to go dip in the Jordan River seven times. This was upsetting to Naaman because he said, *“Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?”* The Scripture tells us that he turned and went away in a rage.

One of Naaman’s servants said to him, *“If you had been told something*

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great, would you not have done it immediately?” Therefore, Naaman went to the Jordan and dipped seven times as he had been instructed. When he did what he was told to do, he was healed of his leprosy.

There are many things we can do that are small and not very meaningful to us, but to God and to those receiving the help, they are very important. We could help one homeless person or someone who needs help in some other way. If we have enough money to go out to eat or go out to places for recreation, just maybe we could or should use a little for others. Sometimes, just a few dollars can do much for someone in need.

In a congregation of which I was a member, Christians come together every Monday night to feed the homeless a hot meal. Some also take their young children to help with this project. They are learning how to give of their time to the Lord by doing good deeds.

While working to feed the hungry and those who are less fortunate than we are, one of the ladies came up with the idea to make lunches so the homeless can have another meal on another day. It would put no one in the poor house if we would all just donate one or two nonperishable items for the lunches or prepare food for the hot meal to help needy people.

Cards and tracts are placed in the sacks. It is our job to provide the lost with the information on how to become Christians and then continue to teach how to remain faithful and grow stronger in the Lord. Jesus said, **“Go”** in Mark 16:16; He did not tell us how to go, and this is one way to obey our Lord. Our job is to provide the lost with the Word, and it is their responsibility to do what they will with the information.

When we send our bill payments out in the mail or hand deliver them, we can put a tract with the payment. There are so many ways in which we can be useful servants of Jesus Christ, “if” we will only act out our Christianity in some meaningful way that is visible to or by which we interact with the world around us (Matthew 5:13-16). 

Martha Lynn Rushmore is a Staff Writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*. She and her husband teach extensively stateside and abroad. They reside in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

PERSONAL EVANGELISM, THE URGENCY OF IT!

Contact alone does not win souls. The Christian who possesses a militant, aggressive spirit because he is a soldier of Jesus Christ wins souls. It is good to be aggressive in the sense of being bold and energetic in performing our duties. The duty of the Christian is to save souls; he is a follower of Christ (1 Peter 2:21), and Christ came to *“seek and to save the lost”* (Luke 19:10). The Bible teaches that we are to *“endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2 Timothy 2:3). We are to *“strive”* lawfully (Verse 5), and Christians are to *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3). When are these things to be done? Not just *a certain time* but *all* the time.

The **home** is a good place. It is there people come to know one another best. Christians are to be *“given to hospitality”* (Romans 12:13), and the term itself (“hospitality,” philoxenia) is “love of strangers.” How better could a man show his love for another than to teach him about Christ?

If people have **visited our services**, they are excellent prospects. If the family has **just moved into town**, if you have **visited a home in the time of illness or death**, these are prospects. A **loved one**, a **neighbor**, the **world** is the battlefield of the Christian. A good thing to remember is, it is not required of God’s people that they be “successful” in leading a large number to obey the Gospel, but that they be faithful in carrying out the Lord’s instructions, *“Go into the whole world and preach the gospel”* (Mark 16:15). Your world and mine is those people mentioned above.

It is true **when truth is taught and defended, that some will reject it**, as did “Felix” (Acts 24:24-25). Others will receive it gladly, as did those on Pentecost. *“They that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:41). If all Christians can develop an aggressive, militant, energetic attitude toward the work of our Lord—**WATCH US GROW!** †

How Do You Worship in Song?

Dayton Keesee

When brethren assemble to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (acapella), varied stages, levels and responses regarding worship may unfold. *Sister Silence* may not sing at all, nor does she open a songbook to gain the richness, benefits and responsibilities the message of the song offers. *Brother Bewildered* who has only been “*in Christ*” for two months, may properly mouth the words, but he has no or limited comprehension of biblical terms, metaphors and figures of speech that make up the beautiful message in the song. He did not—could not—follow Paul’s pattern to “*sing with the understanding*” (1 Corinthians 14:15). On the other hand, *Brother Familiar*, who stated he had sung that song 100 times, sang every verse clearly, but failed miserably to “*make melody*” in his heart “*to the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:19). Two hours later, he would have been unable to tell you what songs were sung at the worship service. *Sister Sing-It*, who knows music, has a good voice and loves to sing, blares out every stanza of every song, but not once was she mindful of Paul’s charges, “*speak to one another*” or “*teach and admonish one another with all wisdom*” (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) when singing. *Brother Disappointed*, who asked the song leader to lead his favorite song (and he didn’t), mumbled through the song service, surely failing in heart to “*sing with the spirit*” (1 Corinthians 14:15). *Brother and Sister Worship* have prayed and prepared, singing “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24), helping to keep the rest of us together! Where are you in this survey?

What Needs to be Done?


Increase the worship-in-song training. In 2001, I taught for a

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semester at Nigerian Christian College (Ukpon—out in the bush). Jacob, a young man seeking training to better preach the Word, was fabulously gifted in music. Once a week, in chapel, he taught the faculty and students a new song. Special attention was first given to the message of the song. He, then, carefully hummed the melody and sang a verse or two. Finally, he would have us sing with him, maybe singing each verse two or three times. It was amazing how much he could accomplish in 30 to 45 minutes. In extra-curricular moments, he worked with gifted students, forming a splendid acapella chorus group.

In most congregations there is a person (or persons) who has had music training. Challenge him or her to spiritualize the heart, prepare material on music markings and sight reading, helping brethren privately and publicly to meaningfully sing with the spirit and the understanding. Maybe have an annual singing school for a week, exhorting each member to attend.

Let each member *crave personally* to worship better in song (1 Peter 2:2). This may be a case of *“you have not because you ask not”* (James 4:2). Get off in a corner and sing the song by P.P. Bliss, “More Holiness Give Me.” The key word in that song is “more,” found 24 times. In an outline, I connected 58 passages of Scripture with the one song!

For the present, remember the illustration of the rooster that had an ostrich egg, used its beak to roll it into the chicken yard, hopped atop it and sincerely cried out, “Now Ladies, I don’t want to rebuke you, embarrass you or discourage you. Just look it over and do the best you can!” Seek for deeper devotion to Him Divine and His directives. 

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

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Is Everything We Do in Life “Worship”?

Kevin L. Moore

In Paul’s letter to the saints at Rome, in the section that has been designated the 1st verse of the 12th chapter, we read, **“Therefore I exhort you, brethren, by God’s mercies, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God...”** The next expression (*tēn logikēn latreían humōn*) has been variously rendered (a) **“your spiritual service”** (ASV), (b) **“your reasonable service”** (NKJV) (c) **“your spiritual worship”** (ESV); (d) **“your spiritual service of worship”** (NASB); (e) **“your spiritual act of worship”** (NIV 1984) and (f) **“your true and proper worship”** (NIV 2011). Which rendering most accurately conveys the sense of the text?

The Greek adjective *logikós* means “reasonable,” “rational” or “spiritual.” The noun *latreía* is “service or worship” (BAGD 467), with emphasis on divine service (cf., Romans 9:4; John 16:2; Hebrews 12:28). The verbal form *latreúō* means to “serve,” especially the carrying out of religious duties (BAGD 467). This is not the same concept as what is communicated by the verb *proskunéō*, which means to “worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to...” (BAGD 716). Paul was not discussing or describing *proskunéō* (“worship”) in Romans 12:1; in fact, this word does not appear anywhere in Romans. (The only biblical record of Paul’s use of the word *proskunéō* (“worship”) is Acts 24:11 and 1 Corinthians 14:25.)

Scriptural worship [*proskunéō*] is something that is done purposefully,

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involving concentration, consideration, and reverence (John 4:20-24; 12:20; Acts 8:27). The intentionality of worship is demonstrated in Acts 24:11, where Paul says he had traveled to Jerusalem *“to worship”* [*proskunéō*]. Obviously, worship is something that is done on purpose; one cannot worship unintentionally or by accident.

While we serve the Lord in all that we do (Romans 12:1; Colossians 3:17), not everything we do in life constitutes worship (e.g. reading the newspaper, sleeping, watching a movie, et al.). When we set aside time and attention for the express purpose of worshiping God, let us do so according to biblical guidelines (1 Corinthians 11:17-29; 14:12-19; 16:1-2; etc.). In everything else, may we be God’s faithful servants. ✝

*** Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are the author’s own translation.**

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Robison’s Rubies

In the early church, the disciples *“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). That is a great model, of course, for the church today. Jesus promised the apostles He would send the Spirit of truth to them and guide them into all truth (John 16:13). They received that Spirit and wrote in the Scriptures their message (Ephesians 3:5). Several warnings in Scripture warn us not to go beyond their teaching (2 Timothy 4:2-5 is one place). I don’t know if the world could fathom the unity the church would see if all believers were to seek and follow the apostles’ doctrine, without adding to or taking from it, but I know that is the unity Jesus wanted.



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WORSHIP

Giving That Brings Glory to God

Demar Elam

What type of giving brings glory to God? Giving that brings glory to God is giving that enables the message of the cross, God's grace to man extended through His Son Jesus Christ, to be proclaimed to every creature. Giving that brings glory to God is giving that relieves the widows, orphans, downtrodden and afflicted. Giving that brings glory to God is giving that causes the average person on the street to glorify God because of the good works which take place as a result of Christian liberality.

The Bible is resplendent (shining brilliantly) with teaching regarding man's need to fulfill his stewardship in giving in such fashion as to bring glory to God. Our giving should not be disgraceful but glorious, wonderful, generous, meaningful, dynamic, and extremely beneficial and fulfilling. Instead of seeing how little we can give and get by with it, we should experience the exhilaration that comes from giving as much as possible and giving it in such a way as to bring glory to God. ***"...And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'"*** (Acts 20:35).

While many are afraid to discuss giving, Jesus wasn't. Our Lord didn't hesitate to use the word, "Give." Listen to the Savior's words in Luke 6:38, where He said, ***"Give, and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*** Notice Jesus actually used the word so many refuse to use today, ***"Give."***

Well, what are the results if we do give? Our Lord promised that He would return to us in accordance to how we gave to Him. Based on that, will you have what you need in life or will you go lacking? There is a direct correlation between our giving and how blessed we are! Jesus promised to give back to us ***"good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and***

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running over will put into your bosom.” Wow! Now please notice this text teaches that Jesus will bless His followers with a measure—plus—based on what they willingly give to Him and to their fellow human beings in need. The question is, “Do we believe Luke 6:38 or not?” We can’t say we believe it if we don’t give in such fashion that brings glory to God.

This is the great lesson to be learned about giving. The Son of God has promised that He will bless us in direct proportion to how generous we have been in our giving. The challenge to His followers is to have the **faith** required to believe that He is all powerful and will actually do what He promised. The sad truth is that so many just don’t have the faith to launch out and give with a big, loving, generous heart that God might be glorified. Does your giving reflect faith in the promise of Luke 6:38? God also made a promise in Malachi 3:10, which reads, *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will be not be room enough to receive it.”* Notice that God expects man to show the condition of his heart by giving to Him, and then He, based on the condition of that heart and that gift, will return accordingly to those who gave the gift. Give generously and receive generously. Give miserly and receive little.

The Son of God promised that He would bless us in direct proportion to our own generosity. Does your giving reflect faith in Christ and His promises in Luke 6:38 and Malachi 3:8-10? The late V.P. Black did so much in his life effectively preaching, writing, teaching and setting an example by his own stewardship of what Christians need to do to be good stewards and to give in such a manner as to glorify God. He said that so far as he knew, the only time God said, *“Try Me”* was in Malachi 3:10. God said in that text, ‘Just test me; try me and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing you’ll not have room to receive.’ Paul told the brethren at Philippi (Philippians 4:10-20) that because of their generosity and care for him they had done well by sharing in his distress. Paul stated that in the beginning of the Gospel when he departed from Macedonia, no church shared with him concerning **giving** and **receiving** but them only. Paul stated they had sent

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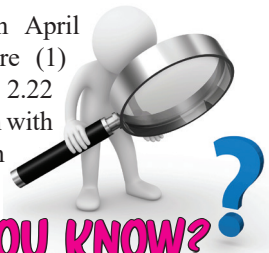
aid once and again for his necessities. This type of giving brought glory to God! The great apostle to the Gentiles told them, *“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account”* (Philippians 4:17). Take note that the giving done by the Christians at Philippi produced fruit which abounded to their account. Their giving glorified God and provided fruit for their heavenly accounts. Paul told them that their giving was, *“A sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”* (Philippians 4:18). Have you ever made any sacrifices financially to support and advance the cause of Christ? Have you ever given a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God?

Notice what Paul told the Philippians would occur from their giving that glorified God. He said, *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Colossians 1:19). There it is again—the assurance of God that He will supply all the needs of those who give sacrificially and glorify Him in the process. *“Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever.” Amen*” (Philippians 4:20). Notice this type of giving caused Paul to say, *“to our God and Father be GLORY forever and ever.” Let our giving bring glory to God!*

Christians should believe in the promises of God and embrace them, realizing that they never lose by giving but prosper instead. This entire matter is really quite simple. God has said to each of His followers that He will return what we give **plus more**. He will add good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. Oh God, increase our faith! ✝

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According to worldatlas.com data, last updated in April 2017, **the four largest world religious groups** are (1) **Christianity**—those who believe in Jesus Christ with 2.22 billion followers, (2) **Islam**—those who believe in Allah with 1.605 billion followers, (3) **Hinduism**—considered an ancient belief system with 1.05 billion followers, and (4) **Buddhism**—who believe in the teachings of Buddha with 488 million followers.



DID YOU KNOW?

How Do You Measure Up?

...The Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

“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. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end...”

“...And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 3:7-14; 18-19



PROVERBS 17:22



The Donald was walking out of the White House and heading toward his limo when a possible assassin stepped forward and aimed a gun.

A secret service agent, new on the job, shouted, "Mickey Mouse!" This startled the would-be assassin, and he was captured.

Later, the secret service agent's supervisor took him aside and asked, "What in the world made you shout Mickey Mouse?"

Blushing, the agent replied, "I got nervous. I meant to shout, "Donald, duck!"



Last year, I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.

I don't need anger management. I need people to stop making me mad!

If God wanted me to touch my toes, he would've put them on my knees.

I'm going to retire and live off of my savings. Not sure what I'll do that second week.



One day a young mother was sick in bed at home with her young daughter. The daughter was about four and always wanting to be of help to her mommy. So, while her mother was sick, the young girl got some magazines for her mom, fluffed all the pillows for her and even made her a cup of tea!

Her mother was very pleased with the tea and asked her daughter how she had ever learned to make tea on her own. Her daughter proudly told her mom, "Well mommy, I've seen you do it LOADS of times. Only this time, I couldn't find the strainer, so I used the flyswatter instead."

"YOU WHAT!" her mommy cried.

"Oh, don't worry mommy. I didn't use the new fly swatter; I used the old one."



The only exercise some folks get nowadays is jumping to conclusions, running down their friends, sidestepping responsibility and pushing their luck.



To pass the time while our plane was being de-iced, the flight attendants played a trivia game with the passengers. They asked us to guess the total number of years the three of them had worked for the airlines. After an attendant collected our estimates, we heard the announcement "The correct answer is 26 years. We have prizes for the two people who came closest with 28 years, and for the passenger in seat 12F who guessed 85 years, would you please

PROVERBS 17:22

meet us at the exit door once we are airborne?”



As a high school football coach, I'm aware that student athletes tend to focus too much on sports. Bob, a fellow coach, was talking about one such player, who called him at home one night. When his wife informed the kid that Bob wasn't home, he became frantic and said he had to speak to the coach right away.

“Just calm down, and I'll have him call you as soon as he gets home,” the coach's wife told him. “What's your number?”

The flustered kid replied, “Three.”



Before Thanksgiving, a Minnesota teacher asked her first grade pupils for what they had to be thankful. “I am thankful,” said one sharp little boy, “that I am not a turkey!”



A group of women were talking together. One woman said, “Our congregation is sometimes down to 30 or 40 on a Sunday.”

Another said, “That's nothing. Sometimes our congregation is down to six or seven.”

A maiden lady in her 70's added her bit. “Why it's so bad in our church on Sundays that when the minister says ‘dearly beloved’ it makes me blush.”



A Mexican bandit made a specialty of crossing the Rio Grande from time to time and robbing banks in Texas. Finally, a reward was offered for his capture, and an enterprising Texas ranger decided to track him down.

After a lengthy search, he traced the bandit to his favorite cantina, snuck up behind him, put his trusty six-shooter to the bandit's head and said, “You're under arrest. Tell me where you hid the loot or I'll shoot you.” However, the bandit didn't speak English, and the ranger didn't speak Spanish.

The ranger asked a local to translate his message. The terrified bandit blurted out, in Spanish, that the loot was buried under the oak tree in back of the cantina. “What did he say?” asked the ranger anxiously. The local answered, “He say he 'no afraid to die!’”



A man walked by a table in a hotel and noticed three men and a dog playing cards. The dog was playing with extraordinary performance.

“This is a very smart dog,” the man commented.

“Not so smart,” said one of the players. “Every time he gets a good hand, he wags his tail.”



Driving my car one afternoon, I rolled through a stop sign. I was pulled over by a police officer who recognized me as his former English teacher.

“Mrs. Brown,” he said, “those stop signs are periods, not commas.”

Behavior Benchmarks

Wayne Barrier

The Bible provides the basis for us to make decisions from day to day and in all situations concerning right and wrong behavior. We tend to follow social norms in deciding what is acceptable behavior. This approach allows us to adjust behavior based on current values and social trends. The result is (1) the acceptance of abortion, homosexuality and perverted sexual norms, (2) aggressive, selfish and greedy lifestyles, (3) dishonesty in every relationship, including family, business and government, and (4) disregard for the needs of the less fortunate among us. We must return to using **biblical benchmarks** to assess behavior and determine right and wrong in every situation and on every issue.

The best place to start is with the response of Jesus in Matthew 22:36-40 when He was asked what was the greatest commandment. His response was, *“And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all you mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”* These commands are repeated over and over as the apostles taught believers and followers of Jesus in the first century (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). Luke’s account of this question (Luke 10:27-37) includes the story of the “good Samaritan.”

Other benchmarks that reflect this basic commandment are provided to address specific situations and attitudes. These include the calls for us to (1) love our enemies (Matthew 5:44), (2) love one another (John 13:35), (3) love Jesus by keeping His commandments (John 14:15), (4) love others enough to give our lives for them (John 15:13-14), (5) be patient, kind, compassionate, without envy, modest, humble, honest, considerate, unresentful and filled with love for biblical truth (1 Corinthians 13), (6) walk by faith in Jesus and His teaching (2 Corinthians 5:7), (7) walk in love

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

(Ephesians 5:2), (8) be kind to one another, tenderhearted and forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32), (9) bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).

Biblical instruction is clear and simple regarding right behavior, values and attitudes, and biblical instruction is also easy to understand. There are consequences for ignoring Scripture (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:12-15; James 1:21-27). We can choose to ignore this teaching, but we will suffer, and we will continue to see a decline of society, be rejected by God and stand condemned in eternity. The choice should be easy to make. Don't let your behavior condemn you. †

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

Now I Know

Cecil May, Jr.

Abraham raised his hand to plunge the knife into his son, Isaac, the son of promise, when the Angel of the Lord stopped him with a word. Then, the Lord said, *“Now I know that you fear God seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me”* (Genesis 22:12).

Isaac was loved by Abraham, as all fathers love their sons. Beyond that, however, Isaac was the son of whom God had said, *“Through Isaac shall your offspring be named”* (Genesis 21:11). Every promise God had made to Abraham was to be fulfilled in Abraham's descendants through Isaac, not in Abraham himself. So, Abraham had faith that God would keep his promises to raise up children through Isaac, even if he also had faith enough to kill Isaac as God commanded. †

[**Editor's Note:** With that degree of faith and trust in God, each child of God ought live his or her life daily. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

COURAGEOUS FAITH

Therman Hodge

Faith is not just knowing the will of God but having the courage to act on it. May this degree of faith be seen in you and me.

One prominent Bible character had the courage to defy a king (Hebrews 11:23). Moses' parents were courageous. They hid him for three months! Then his mother made a boat and set him in the river!

What could cause a woman to do this with her baby? Could she not support the child any longer? Was it that the child was a burden to the family? Was he maybe an embarrassment to the family?

No! The king demanded that all the Israelite newborn males be killed. What would you do for your child when you were that desperate? **Moses' mother trusted the Lord!** There is more to the biblical account (Exodus 1:22-2:10).

Moses had the courage to identify with his people (Hebrews 11:24-26). He courageously suffered with them (Hebrews 11:24). Nursed by his own mother and learning of his nation's dilemma, Moses refused to live a lie to keep material benefits. Who we are is more important than riches and pleasure!

Moses suffered hardships for Christ (Hebrews 11:25-26; Exodus 2:11-14). Christ suffered immensely for us (1 Peter 1:21-23). We should be willing to suffer for Him. Serving Christ will bring some hardships and afflictions (2 Timothy 3:12). We must stand with God's people in times of difficulty. Suffering for Christ is superior to the seasonal pleasure of sin. The results of suffering with our Lord are better than worldly riches (Matthew 5:11-12).

Moses forsook the land of Egypt (Hebrews 11:27). He might have been second in command of the greatest nation in the world at that time. After all, he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He gave it all up, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible!

God's children need the confidence to face incredible odds (Hebrews

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11:28-29). The last plague was an attack on the house of Pharaoh through the death of the firstborn! Blood placed over the door to indicate who to pass over spared Israelite families (Exodus 12:21-23). There was no blood sprinkled on the houses of the Egyptians. To be saved today, we must be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:5-7).

Crossing the Red Sea required faith and obedience by the fleeing Israelite nation, especially by Moses who led them (Exodus 14:21-28). Deliverance was through the Red Sea that God had divided. Israel had to trust God to hold the waters back. Every Israelite who entered the sea was saved, and every Egyptian who followed was lost!

Do we possess courageous faith like Moses? We need that degree of faith today as we follow and imitate Jesus Christ. †

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Robison's Rubies

If the Bible is authoritative (and it is), then how do I understand that authority? It's simple, if we will let it be. If God says nothing about a subject, like which football team to cheer, we are free to choose. If the

Bible gives a generic command, like ***“Go into all the world,”*** we can go in any means available—from foot to carriage to car to plane. If the Bible gives specifics, everything else is eliminated. No one claiming Christianity would dare use cake and ice cream for the Lord's Supper. Why not? The Bible doesn't say we can't! But, when it specifies the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread, all else is eliminated. That makes sense, doesn't it? We might examine ourselves to see how well we are holding to Bible authority.

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DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

A Perfect Heart

Roger Wright

“Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes, and to keep His commandments, so as this day” (1 Kings 8:61). These are the words of King Solomon at the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem. He was wise enough to see that the blessing and security of that great building depended upon the faithfulness and spiritual integrity of those who came there to worship. He told the people to have a perfect heart. How is that possible?

Some people think of the word “perfect” as meaning “absolutely faultless.” We all know that we are weak and sinful, and therefore, to aspire to have a perfect heart in that way is a losing cause. That is not what “perfect” means in this passage.

A perfect heart is a true heart. We err from time to time, but our hearts are set on pleasing the Lord. Our faith does not waver like a wave of the sea (James 1:6). A true line is a straight line. We are called to follow a straight path (Psalm 5:8) with the Lord.

A perfect heart is a pure heart. God is holy and morally unblemished in every respect. He wants us to be holy as He is (1 Peter 1:15-16). We should be so thankful for the cleansing that we have in our Savior. The Temple that Solomon built was amazing and glorious, but it was no more glorious than God’s temple today, His holy people (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20).

A perfect heart is a well-developed heart. We are called to grow to be complete in every way, not acting like selfish little children. Solomon started out so well, and God blessed him with great wisdom. As time went by, he allowed his selfishness, pride, desire for many wives and his lack of focus on God to lead him away into idolatry. As we grow and mature, we should be drawing ever closer to God, instead of drifting away from Him.

Grant us grace to have perfect hearts: hearts that are true, pure and well-developed to serve God all the days of our lives. Developing this kind of perfect heart is possible and a worthy goal for each child of God. 🙏

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SNAKE HANDLERS

(Mark 16:14-20)

Lanny Smith

There are still a few “snake handling churches” around! Every once in a while, we see a news story about someone who was bitten, then later died. In truth, Mark 16 refers to *“the signs of an apostle”* (14, 20; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:12), showing that in the Apostolic Age, even the bite of a venomous snake would not kill an apostle. However, that age ended in the first century, and “snake handlers” today have no such godly protection.



Yet, do we sometimes do our OWN brand of “snake-handling?” Consider: Satan is *“that serpent of old”* (Genesis 3:1; Revelation 12:9). So, how do we “handle” his temptations when they come (2 Corinthians 11:3)? This lesson will ask, “What ‘snake’ are you trying to handle?”

I. **Bad language** (Ephesians 4:29)—“Corrupt” words reveal a “corrupt” heart; handling that snake says nothing good about you! It will “bite” you with a bad reputation—and a lost soul!

II. **Drinking** (Proverbs 23:29-35; 1 Peter 5:8)—Alcohol immediately begins to dull sobriety, and you can’t be “sober” when you’re under the influence! Handling that snake leads often to even greater sins!

III. **Drugs** (Galatians 5:20, sorcery/pharmakia)—the misuse and abuse of drugs (both legal and illegal) will bring about addiction, damaged health—**and** condemnation!

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IV. **Gambling** (1 Corinthians 6:12)—Gambling can overwhelm you in a sea of addiction, causing the loss of your job, your family and your friends! The bite of this snake is deadly, indeed!

V. **Worldly cares** (Matthew 13:22)—Being too busy to serve God (work, school, kids activities) chokes the Word! Despite your “good intentions,” this snake will still kill your relationship with God!


VI. **Multiple family issues**

A. **Affair** (Proverbs 6:27-35)—Affairs can cost your reputation, your marriage, your kids, your job and your life!

B. **Spousal abuse** (Ephesians 5:25-27)—Women can be abusive, but usually it’s the man (physically stronger) who is guilty of physical abuse.

C. **Rebellious kids** (Ephesians 6:1-3)—Kids may sneak around, openly rebel or “attack” parents.

D. **Child abuse** (Ephesians 6:4, provoke)—There is physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse of children in this broken world.

Whatever “snake” you’re trying to “handle,” know that ***it’s just the Devil in disguise***—and you are going to be bitten! The best thing you can do is just shake it off into the fire (Acts 28:1-5)! Get rid of that snake! It’s hypocritical to make fun of a “snake-handler,” when you are doing the same thing (Romans 2:1)! 

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

“...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment...” (2 Peter 2:9).

Suggestions for a Happier Family Life

Ronald D. Reeves

Several years ago, I read an article that focused attention on practical steps that we may take to better ensure a happier family life. Among the suggestions penned were the following:

- ① Keep the marriage relationship first. This is not only scriptural, but it is also wise, knowing that a child's security is best served by the love existing between father and mother.
- ② Learn to show affection in both word and deed, developing a like for family members with a willingness to communicate it.
- ③ Keep a check on materialism while learning how to provide what is needed for healthy development. Our greater interest should be in people rather than items.
- ④ Build memories by using family time as an opportunity to build a "Museum of Memories."
- ⑤ Strive to answer ego needs as we enjoy being around people who do us good and as we lose self in the service of others.
- ⑥ Build honor and expectation as we instill in our family a balanced sense of pride so that one will expect more of self.

These six suggestions, though age-old, may be of great value as we pass through this year and look to the arrival of many more, all with the hope and promise of better things for self and those we love so dearly. ✝

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God's View of Marriage

Gary C. Hampton



Marriage was designed by God to fulfill a basic need of man, companionship. The first five days of creation repeatedly have God observing his work and noting ***“it was good”*** (Genesis 1:9, 12, 18, 21, 25). The Almighty made man on the sixth day and noted, ***“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him”*** (Genesis 2:18).

The Creator brought every animal that He made to Adam to be named (Genesis 2:19-20). “The relation of man to the animals of the field would not fill this loneliness of man. Adam knew this from his naming of the animals” (William E. Woodson, *Writings and Notes*).

God’s revealing to man of the special creation who was to serve as

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his companion for life brought forth a wonderful statement from the man. ***“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*** Moses’ inspired addition seems fully appropriate. ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”*** (Genesis 2:23-24).

Jesus’ most thorough teaching about marriage arose because of the Pharisees’ question, ***“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”*** (Matthew 19:3). The Lord thought the answer was implicit in Moses’ account of the creation of man and woman. ***“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh”*** (Matthew 19:4-6).

God saw marriage as a permanent relationship, only to be severed by death. Paul explained, ***“For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband”*** (Romans 7:2).

God sees marriage as a means of fulfilling man’s important need for companionship. He intended for it to last for life. †

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Did You Know?

A symbiotic relationship occurs when two different types of organisms live together to the benefit of both. Without this type of relationship between plants and flying insects, we would not have fruits and vegetables to eat.

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Raised to Be a Man

Derek Broome

A young boy sitting in the backseat of the car yells out to his parents, “It’s not fair. Why can’t I have it?” The boy continues to grow older and older. He is now in his adolescent years. “Why, why do we have to go to church?” The boy is now a teenager. “You just don’t understand. You have never been through what I am going through!” The boy goes off to college. “I’m not a child anymore. I can do what I want to do.” The boy is now a husband and a father. “What am I going to do?”

His entire life he thought that he was being trained to be a child when in all actuality he was being raised to be a man. His parents taught him that life is not always easy, and we do not always get what we want. They taught him to work hard in this life and to be responsible. They taught him to love others and to stand up for what is right. They taught him care, compassion and love. Most importantly, they taught him about God and all the things that our Savior has done for us. They taught him about prayer and how our Lord is listening and watching over us.

Being a child is not always easy. Sometimes youths make the wrong decisions. Things can be confusing, and at times young people learn lessons the hard way. The same is true for being a parent. Each day is a new journey. Some days will be better than others. We will find



mountaintops, and we will find valleys. Yet, no matter what, keep God first in life. ***“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it”*** (Proverbs 22:6). 

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My Beloved is Mine, and I Am His

Denny Petrillo

This is a key phrase in the Song of Solomon (2:16; 6:3; 7:10). The couple belonged to no one else but to each other. Certainly, Solomon would have done well to have continually acknowledged this truth and not to have turned his affections to other wives.

The New Testament often speaks of the unity shared by man and wife (Matthew 19:6; Hebrews 13:6). The Shulamite maiden in the Song of Solomon had the confidence that her beloved belonged to her. Should not every wife live with this same confidence? Also, she left no doubt in his mind that she was his. He needed not concern himself that she might have intentions of being unfaithful to him.

When individuals make commitments to one another, they also make commitments to God. God sees and knows what people do and whether they are indeed faithful. The road to unfaithfulness begins when one does not control lusts. This is why Job said that he had *“made a covenant”* with his eyes. Looking upon a virgin was the beginning of the road to unfaithfulness, and Job knew it (Job 31:1). This is why Jesus taught so strongly against lust (Matthew 5:27-28).

The words, “I belong to you,” are only words unless he or she intends to back up the statement with diligent effort to remain faithful. The foundation for this is to control one’s lusts (James 1:13-14). Most say, on their wedding day, “until death do we part.” **Committed couples mean it!** †



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The War for Our Homes and Families

Betty Burton Choate

In today's very broken culture, Satan has introduced every violation of God's plan for the home and the family that would be imaginable. **"Live in"** situations—couples living together without marriage—is now the norm for about half of the women in the US under the age of 30. **Divorce** tears homes apart, with half of first marriages ending in divorce, 60 percent of second marriages and 73 percent of third marriages breaking up—but the number in more recent years is diminishing! Why? Because of the tendency to "live in" rather than go through the trouble and the expense of a divorce! What a heartbreaking reason for divorce rates to be declining!

What effects do broken homes have on the children? Statistics show that they are much more likely to fail in school and to eventually drop out before achieving a basic education. They are more prone to have low self-esteem and to suffer from anxiety and stress, often resulting in major health problems. One law firm polled 2,000 children of divorced parents, with this result: "The subjects reported witnessing aggression (42 percent), were forced to comfort an upset parent (49 percent), and had to



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lie for one or the other (24 percent). The outcome was one in 10 turned to crime, and 8 percent considered suicide.” Sadly, children from broken and dysfunctional families often follow their parents’ example and use the trial-and-error approach in marriage, resulting in divorces for themselves.

Yet, Satan is not satisfied with destroying historically traditional marriage. He has insisted that the world accept “same-sex marriages,” approve of homosexuality as simply an alternate way of life and “protect” women’s “rights” by legalizing abortion. Now, there is a growing growl for the acceptance of pedophilia as a “normal” thing that is actually good for children!

Satan’s plan is obvious to those who are watching— to take us as individuals and as a nation to hell!

What is the biblical plan for the home, for the family? Of course, we recognize that it would include the husband/father, the wife/mother and the children. Genesis 2:7, 18; 21-24 reads, *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being...And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’ ...And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

God’s plan for the union of a man and woman was a lifetime commitment in marriage, in which both would live as “halves of a whole,” each one doing his/her part to build a godly and productive life together. Ephesians 5:22-24 explains, *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”*

Does this passage mean that women are inferior to men? Does it mean that men are to be “overlords,” refusing to hear any thoughts their wives may

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have on a subject? No, husbands and wives, together, make up the marital unit. God gave brains and abilities to both, and each must have input into everything involved in their lives, but the bottom line is that God holds the husband *responsible* for the family. As our society has grown away from respecting male leadership, and women in many cases have “taken over,” women themselves are the great losers. More and more, they become “single parents,” and their own leadership takes them to situations of insecurity and total responsibility for themselves and for their children. God’s plan was that the lives of the wife and the children be sheltered by the husband’s responsible care.

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. **So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’**” (Ephesians 5:25-31).*

Why is it the most tremendous of marital blessings that the husband be responsible for his family in all things? Because God’s command to him is that he love his wife just like our Lord loves His bride, the church. What kind of love is that? *One that is so deep he will be willing to die to protect his family!* If a husband loves his wife and children to this degree, will he not do everything in his power to bring only the best into their lives? Should any wife be reluctant to be submissive to a husband who loves her so much he would literally die for her?

The problem in this current culture is that both men and women are ignoring these clear commands of God concerning marriage. Disaster can be the only result.

Typically, the marital union results in children being born into the home. The responsibility of the parents is not only to provide for the physical, social and emotional needs of their children but to *“bring them*

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up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

Parents will do everything in their power to provide for the physical needs of their children. Because too many are determined that their little ones have everything their hearts desire, often the husband and the wife both feel compelled to work full-time jobs. Admittedly, in some cases this is necessary to pay even the minimum daily expenses, but often extras and luxuries are the motivation for both parents working long hours outside of the home. The children are in day care centers, with a sitter or in school, and as they get older, they take care of themselves after school hours. Tired parents come home to a long list of responsibilities: dinner to fix, washing to do, homework to supervise, mail/bills to attend, housework to do, a lawn to mow, sports events in which the children are involved to which they must be taken and so on. *How can there be time for all of these things as well as for the most important responsibilities: **meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of the children?*** How can there be family time for deepening understanding and bonds, and—of paramount importance—teaching those precious souls about God and helping them to grow in their relationship with Him?




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Too soon, those little ones will be teenagers, faced with the immorality of many of their peers and having to fight all the temptations Satan offers. Remember, his goal is to destroy them, and he will win if parents don't make it their number one priority to develop the spiritual life and knowledge in the souls entrusted to their care. Statistics show that up to 80 percent of children raised by Christian parents leave the Lord's church soon after leaving home! The reason for this heartbreaking loss is obvious in many cases: the parents were too busy raising "secular" children to give them the spiritual molding they so desperately needed.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Part of the spiritual training also involves parental molding, just as our Heavenly Father molds His children. With **love**—but also with **clarity and firmness**—we must teach them that obedience to us is also obedience to God.

It is vital that parents learn to think carefully before they speak! *Don't command an unnecessary thing and then back down rather than have a fight with the child.* If you say something, mean it, and then with love and firmness, enforce its obedience.

If there is rebellion in the heart of the child, there are numerous ways to curb the attitude: time out, loss of a privilege, even controlled spanking! God said concerning correction **“...What son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ...We have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”** (Hebrews 12:5-11). 

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Judge Not?

Tony Brewer

Many in the world, knowing only one or two verses from the Bible, cite Jesus' words to the Pharisees about judging in order to justify all manner of sinful acts (Matthew 7:1). Sadly, those same people do not consider

the context of the verse. They do not keep reading. The fact that we are to judge is assumed in the text because Jesus goes on to say, *"...first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:5). Jesus actually was teaching that in order to judge a brother one must take heed unto himself first. Of course, this is in harmony with other passages of Scripture (Galatians 6:1).


Christians are supposed to judge. This is a commandment, which applies to us, to judge, but to judge righteously according to the Word of God. *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment"* (John 7:24).

We also should have studied enough (2 Timothy 2:15) to be able to discern (judge) between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). Please understand that Christians are supposed to judge. So, judging is not wrong; Christians must do it (John 7:24; Hebrews 5:14).

Now, for your perusal, notice these verses where we are commanded to judge, and judging is considered something righteous to do. Understand that not all judging is wicked. *"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?"* (1 Corinthians 5:12). *"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world*

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shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). *“Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”* (1 Corinthians 6:3). *“If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church”* (1 Corinthians 6:4). *“I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”* (1 Corinthians 6:5). *“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say?”* (1 Corinthians 10:15). *“Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?”* (1 Corinthians 11:13). *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”* (1 Corinthians 11:31). *“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge”* (1 Corinthians 14:29). *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:”* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

In order to ascertain whether or not the Bible condemns something, one must understand the context. Judging is not inherently sinful. There is a righteous judgment that Christians must make. It is this writer’s prayer that men no longer use Jesus’ words recorded by Matthew for an excuse to sin (Matthew 7:1). May we ever seek to do the right thing and not to hide behind pseudo-Christianity. “Don’t judge me, Jesus knows my heart” should never be used as a comfort to the conscience for sin. Jesus knowing our hearts, if we are in sin, should scare us to death! That is, we ought to put to death our sins (Colossians 3:5). So, judge for yourself, is judging a requirement for Christians? 

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[**Editor’s Note:** The word “judge” in the citations above, as well as in numerous other New Testament passages, are forms of the Greek word, “*krino*.” It primarily and first means to distinguish or to decide about something under consideration. The context in which the word appears determines its fuller meaning in a given instance. For instance, judging can be merely evaluation of a situation or based on distinguishing an act or an actor as in violation of biblical doctrine, whereupon in the latter case, judgment results in a negative appraisal of a deed or a person. Christians are called upon to be fruit inspectors (Matthew 7:16-20), but judgment that amounts to assigning a person to an eternal habitation with Satan in hell is not the prerogative of any human (James 4:11-12). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



Scavenger Hunt

through 1 Timothy

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. Why did Christ Jesus come into the world?
2. Name two individuals Paul said made “shipwreck” of their faith.
3. For whom should we pray?
4. Who is the only mediator between God and men?
5. Name the two positions in the church for which Paul lists qualifications.
6. Paul wrote to Timothy so he would know how to behave in what location?
7. What is “profitable for all things”?
8. What must be present for one to accept an accusation against an elder?
9. What does godliness with contentment bring?
10. What is the root of all evil?

The Numbers Incident

Tam Raynor

During the wilderness wanderings, Moses' sister Miriam grew old watching her baby brother lead a great nation and her other brother, Aaron, work as the highest spiritual leader of the new nation of Israel. At some point, when Miriam should have been displaying the wisdom of age, she made a bad decision. Maybe she became jealous of her brothers. After all, she did help save Moses when he was just a baby. She did lead the women, and people called her a prophetess. Or, maybe she felt unhappy about Moses marrying again, to a woman from Cush, more than likely with dark skin! Of all the nerve! Now, this new woman would get all the attention! Whatever the reason, Miriam managed to convince Aaron to go along with causing trouble in the camp. Aaron could serve as the great leader! Moses was just the baby of the family! Miriam and Aaron, each well over a 100-years-old, began chirping louder and louder, when unexpectedly—God came for a visit.

The Lord moved near with His cloud and scolded the two badly-behaved senior citizens for their terrible sins of jealousy, backbiting and treason (Numbers 12:1-15). Since Miriam was the ringleader (remember the golden calf incident, Aaron had no backbone), God righteously punished only her with full-body leprosy—a white blob of oatmeal-with-clothes-on! Miriam's brothers immediately begged God's mercy for her. The Lord said she must be punished for seven days! What an ego-buster! God visually displayed the disgust He has for envy and spiritual treason.

Miriam's age and position in life did not matter to God. Sin and punishment have no age limit. Moses wrote about this as an example of what God does to sinful people. ***“Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt”*** (Deuteronomy 24:9). Folks, we don't want God to visit us and find us in the middle of sin, no matter how old we are! ✝

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BIBLE CHARACTERS


No Match for Our Master

Jerry R. Kendall

It has become fashionable to deny the reality of the devil. There are even some who occupy pulpits who either deny his existence or declare that belief in him has no real bearing on our lives. Some regard the devil as a myth conjured up in the dark recesses of a fearful and uncivilized mind. Others visualize him in a red asbestos suit, a forked tail, horns and carrying a pitch fork. All these ideas are false and detrimental to the truth about the real **deceiver of mankind**.

Satan is real and comes clothed in every conceivable way. What he doesn't want is for us to see him as he really is. He wants all to wear his blindfold so he can personally lead as many souls as he possibly can to destruction and damnation away from God forever. He is the father of lies (John 8:44), deceitfully wicked, consumed with hate, never to be trusted, the enemy of God and all righteousness, and the enemy of everyone. He desires to be worshipped and endeavors to get his followers to enter his **rebellion** against the Almighty. He fights against the truth and opposes every good thing as well as tries to overcome it. He is the original hypocrite who wants us to deny the reality of hell awaiting him (Matthew 25:41). His eternal doomed is sealed, and he wants us with him.

God tells us Satan is our **adversary** (1 Peter 5:8), who stands against us and brings false charges concerning us. He is the **destroyer** (Revelation 9:1), out to **wreck the Word of God**. He is the **deceiver**, not foolish enough to parade his real identity (Revelation 12:9). He uses various baits to "hook" us. Let us remember that he is the **tempter**.

Yet, he can be overcome (Revelation 12:11). From the beginning, God let us know of the battle and of the end result (Genesis 3:15). When God allowed the devil to demonstrate his strength upon the earth, it was to show that regardless of what he did, there was never a problem for our Lord. The **victory** is ours through Him (1 Corinthians 15:57). 

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Lessons from a Coffin

Patrick Morrison



Many events from the life of Joseph exemplify the great faith that he had in God. You may recall the advances of Potiphar's wife toward the young, vulnerable Joseph. He maintained his purity, for he knew that to give in to temptation was to sin against God (Genesis 39:9). Perhaps you remember Joseph's attitude toward his brothers who had so mistreated him. His faith in God allowed him to maintain an attitude of love and concern for his brothers (Genesis 50:19-21). However, no other event in the life of Joseph shows his great faith in God as does the commandment he gave concerning his death (Genesis 50:25-26) that his bones were to be taken to that land promised by God to His people. Many great lessons can be gleaned from the injunction Joseph gave concerning his burial.

First, it shows that Joseph's faith was not dimmed. He was separated from everything and everyone he knew and loved—everyone, that is, except for God. Joseph was in an idolatrous nation where no one knew him. He could have very easily renounced his faith in God and done as he pleased, but Joseph's faith would not allow him to do so. He was separated from God's people, yet he was determined to please God, even if he were the only one in the whole nation who was willing to take this stand. His faith was his own. It was not inherited, and it was not reliant upon others. Because of this, Joseph did not allow circumstances that occurred

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throughout his life to dim his faith.

Second, the commandment Joseph gave concerning his death shows that his heart was in Canaan, even though he was in Egypt. Joseph could see past the adversity. He knew that the things he had endured were not the end of it all. Through the eye of faith, Joseph could see the unseen. In his heart, Joseph longed for that land that God had promised to His people (Genesis 12:1-3). Although Joseph did not know when this would take place, he knew that it would happen. God promised it would be so, and in Joseph's heart, that settled it. He knew he was but a stranger in a strange land, a citizen of the land of Canaan, merely passing through Egypt.

Third, the commandment Joseph gave concerning his death serves as a reminder. It reminds us that God is faithful to keep His promises. Joseph's coffin is a reminder that we are all mortal. Despite this fact, Joseph's coffin reminds us that there is hope of life beyond this life. His coffin reminded Israel that Egypt was not their home, and it reminds us that this world is not our home. Joseph's coffin serves as a reminder that we need to be patient. It took over 215 years for Joseph's command concerning his death to be fulfilled! Every time the children of Israel saw Joseph's coffin, or walked past his tomb, they were reminded of these things. Joseph faced the hardships of life with an unwavering faith, and he faced death with the same great faith. What a great lesson in faith for all of us! †

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, USA.

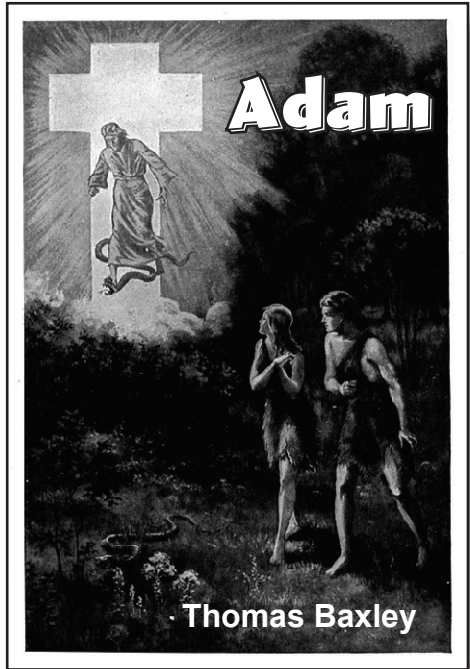
Did You Know?

Nineveh, located on the Tigris River, was the capital of the Assyrian empire. The city was destroyed in 612 B.C. by the armies of Media and Babylon. Shortly after the destruction of the city, the empire collapsed. At the height of its rule, the Assyrian empire spanned from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. during the life of the prophet Isaiah.



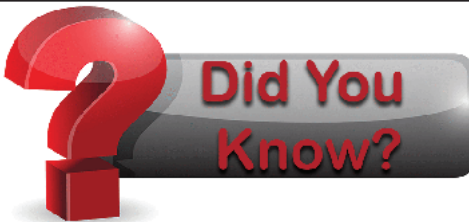
BIBLE CHARACTERS

When studying about the major characters in the Bible, one must include examination of the biblical text about Adam—the first character in the Bible. Adam was the first man, directly created by God as He blew into his nostrils the breath of life. Adam not only has the distinction of being the first human, but also the first (along with Eve) to have an unblemished relationship with God. We know, ultimately, that Adam failed in his duty to lead his wife and be faithful to God. Because of their failures, mankind’s relationship with God has been marred ever since by sin and separation.



That, though, is not *the end of the story*. What was lost in the first Adam has been regained in the second Adam—Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12-19). In Christ, the true Son of God, life and relationship are restored. †

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



decreases with each new generation.

According to a 2014 Barna Group poll, 92% of Americans believe Jesus was “a real person who actually lived.” However, the data also shows the number of believers in this statement

Can a Wife and Mother Work Outside the Home and Be Pleasing to God?

Rebecca Rushmore

I am an engineering student, studying computer science/software engineering. Is it wrong for a daughter of God to go into such a predominately male field? I want to be a homemaker and a good wife and mother if God blesses me with a family.

The above question was posed by a young lady two years into a program of study for her chosen career field. In other comments not included above, she expressed an admirable desire to be obedient to God's will, even if it means abandoning her last two years of work.

As in all religious matters, one can only know the will of God by studying His Word (2 Timothy 2:15). The young woman's question concerning the appropriateness of her working outside the home probably arises from reading Titus 2:5. ***"To be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed"*** (NKJV). The word ***"homemakers"*** is translated as ***"keepers at home"*** in the KJV and ***"workers at home"*** in the ASV. The larger context of this verse, Titus 2:1-10, reflects the instructions that the apostle Paul wanted the young preacher, Titus, to give to his fellow Christians. Notice that men and women, young and old, as well as slaves were directed how to conduct their lives. Paul also provided the reason for such conduct: ***"proper for sound doctrine"*** (v. 1), ***"that the word of God may not be blasphemed"*** (v. 5), ***"showing yourself to be a pattern of good works"*** (v. 7), ***"that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you"*** (v. 8) and ***"that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things"*** (v. 10).

The focus of Titus 2:4-5 is not that a woman's only place is a subservient position in the home. The context expresses that a woman's place is to conduct

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herself so that others may see Christ living in her (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15). One aspect of her life is to be a homemaker. Her primary responsibility in the home is to oversee the daily operations and any children. This does not mean she cannot have any activities or interests outside the home.

Consider for a moment two biblical examples. First, read about the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31.

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:10-31)

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This woman was praised for her work. Not only does she see to the feeding, clothing and comfort of her family, she was also involved in activities outside of her home. This virtuous woman found time to see to the needs of the poor. She also conducted business activities (bought land, made and sold garments). All she did brought honor to God, to herself, to her husband and to her family.



Second, notice Lydia from Acts 16:11-15.

Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized,

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she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.

Lydia was a business woman, *“a seller of purple.”* This woman lived in Philippi, though she was from the city of Thyatira. Her hometown was well known for the purple dyes harvested from local shellfish. Fabrics dyed in this color were worn mainly by the rich, as they were the only ones who could afford them. Though the details of Lydia’s family life are not recorded in Scripture, the text does indicate she and her household were obedient to the Gospel preached by Paul. After Lydia’s conversion, due to an incident with some unscrupulous men, Paul and Silas spent time in prison (Acts 16:16-39). Upon their release, they returned to Lydia’s home for a brief time (v. 40). The text in no way indicates Lydia was condemned for her work outside of the home. In fact, Paul and his company enjoyed the hospitality she was able to provide because of her business.

From the Scriptures cited, it is evident a woman can work outside the home and still be pleasing to God. However, it is not true that every woman who works outside the home is obedient to God’s will. A woman who desires or needs to work outside the home should carefully consider several factors.

First, will the chosen job violate any of God’s laws? Romans 13:1-7 instructs Christians to abide by the laws of the land, so long as those laws do not go against God’s commands (Acts 5:29). A job that requires one to participate in illegal activities or practices should not be held by a Christian. Additionally, any job that places a Christian in an environment that is opposed to Christian values and morals (i.e., a bar, alcohol manufacturing/distributing, a casino, etc.) or prevents a person from letting her light shine for God (Matthew 5:16) should be avoided.

Second, will the schedule of the chosen job prevent one from participating with the local congregation in worship or other activities on a regular basis or prevent one from taking care of the responsibilities in the home? God commands His people to come together to worship Him (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25) and to spread the Gospel to others (Matthew 28:19-20). As already noted, a woman’s primary responsibility in the home is to make sure the physical and spiritual needs of the family are met. A job that requires one to

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regularly be away from home so as to fail in these duties should be avoided.

Third, is a job outside the home one that is approved by one's husband (if married)? In addition to the responsibility of a homemaker, a wife is to be obedient to her husband (Titus 2:5) and to submit to him (Ephesians 5:22, 33). Husbands and wives are partners who work together in the home, though God has given the husband the role of head of the home (Ephesians 5:22-33). If a husband and a wife are not in agreement on the wife working outside the home, the job should be avoided.

With a careful and honest consideration of God's Word, a woman can work outside the home and still be pleasing to God. For further study on the text of Proverbs 31, please see the following links to articles in the pages of *Gospel Gazette Online*.

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2002/jul/page16.htm>

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/1999/jul/page10.shtml>

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2012/jul/page15.html>

Likewise, further study on the roles of women and the text of Ephesians 5 can be found at the links provided.

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2012/jun/page15.html>

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2000/may/page5.shtml>

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/1999/apr/page13.shtml> 

[Editor's Note: Some of the foregoing information regarding the type and nature of jobs is likewise applicable to male Christians, too. Occupations that are either illegal or biblically impermissible ought not to be chosen by either Christian men or Christian women; Christian men must permit their light to shine, too. In addition, Christian men ought to avoid work that habitually prevents them from assembling with God's people or infringes upon one's homelife to the extent that he cannot effectively function as the head of the home, a husband to his wife or a father to his children. Christian men must not opt for success in this physical world at the expense of the spiritual welfare of either themselves or their families. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

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If Christ Is Not Risen, Does It Matter?

Ardron Hinton


“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

Now if Christ Is Not Risen...

1. Faith is futile.
2. You are still in your sins.
3. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished (there is no eternal life).
4. Hope is futile.
5. It makes God a false witness. It declares Christ’s mission a failure (John 3:16).

Thank God that all these negative statements are made positive by Christ’s resurrection.

But Now Christ Is Risen...”

Strong evidence supports this statement. Does it matter if we believe it? Yes, it matters. It makes all the difference in the world and eternity. 

Ardron Hinton (1929-2015) was a longtime preacher of the Gospel in Oklahoma, USA.

Seven Dimensions of Love!

Mark N. Posey

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Introduction:

1. The world is starving for love.
2. Since **“God is love,”** according to 1 John 4:8, I’m convinced the world is actually starving for God!
3. Consider love from seven different dimensions.

Body:

I. Love BACK

A. I look back and see the One who died for me (Galatians 2:20).

B. **“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again”** (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

II. Love UP

A. I look up and see the greatest lover of all!

B. **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”** (Matthew 22:37; cf., 1 John 4:19).

III. Love OUT

A. I look out and see my neighbor!

B. **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** (Matthew 22:39; c.f., Galatians 6:10).

IV. Love AROUND

A. I look around and see my own spiritual family!

B. **“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13:35; c.f., 1 John 3:17).

CHARTS & OUTLINES

V. Love WITHIN

A. I look inside and see the soul God gave me!

B. *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:39; c.f., 16:26).

VI. Love FORWARD

A. I look ahead and see the Lord Who wants me!


B. *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12; c.f., Titus 2:14).

VII. Love DOWN

A. I look at the uplifted Christ on the cross and hear what He says to me!

B. *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34; c.f., Romans 5:8).

Conclusion:

1. John 3:16 is one of the all-time cherished and well-known Scriptures in the Bible.
2. It is frequently called the “golden text” of Scripture.
3. Martin Luther called it the miniature Gospel.
4. It has been called the Gospel in a nutshell.
5. It has been called a love letter from God written in blood and addressed to all.
6. If ever there was a verse that Satan would love to blot out of the Bible, it would be John 3:16.
7. If ever there was a verse that makes hell tremble, it is John 3:16.
8. If ever there was a verse that has lightened the path to Heaven for multitudes, it is John 3:16.
9. Thank God for His great love! 

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

WHAT IS THE BIRTH DATE OF YOUR CHURCH?




J. Randal Matheny

The United Methodist Church is celebrating 50 years of its birth with the merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968. An article published today interviewed witnesses who recalled the birth of the new denomination.

The article's title reminds one of Jesus' words in Mark 9.1. *"I tell you the truth, there are some standing here who will not experience death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."* The original witnesses to the new manifestation of God's kingdom, in the church, have long passed away.

Denominations count their beginnings with human leaders, names and doctrines. They started in places far from the city of Jerusalem, just as the UMC started in Dallas, Texas. None of them bear the marks of the church born of the Holy Spirit, by the will of God, on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2.

The UMC contains many fine people who have the best of motives, and yet, it is not the Lord's church. Mergers will never attain the unity of the Spirit. A denomination, no matter how large or well intentioned, falls under the censure of Scripture for its departures from Jesus' teaching and for its contribution to division.

Blessed are those who belong to the Lord's church which began in Jerusalem sometime in the decade of the 30s of the first century. Let us humbly embrace the teaching of Christ and be true Christians who obey Him in all things. Let us abandon manmade divisions and be added to the number of the saved in the church of Jesus Christ. 

J. Randal Matheny is a long-time missionary in Brazil.

Special Operations Team for Guyana, South America

Louis Rushmore

Many Christian brethren from various churches of Christ in the USA have been evangelizing in Guyana, South America for decades, and still, numerous Christians representing several congregations in the States continue to labor for our Lord Jesus in that tropical nation. Admittedly, these efforts have borne and even now bear fruit for Christ. Otherwise, there would not be churches and brethren throughout the country with whom my coworkers and I could interact in a sort of “Phase Two” approach to evangelizing the Guyanese.

Most evangelistic programs in Guyana—as well as across the globe—are localized efforts, which are primarily purposed to baptize people. Methodologies contrast with each other and may very well hinder actual *conviction* and *conversion* or contrariwise favorably contribute to determination and dedication necessary to produce spiritually strong Christians and mature congregations of the Lord’s church.

Whereas typically missionaries busy themselves with evangelism or sowing the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11; Mark 16:15-16), my coworkers and I in Guyana primarily **water** that seed. We major in what the apostle Paul attributed to Apollos, and we minor in what Paul ascribed to himself. ***“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase”*** (1 Corinthians 3:6 NKJV). This *biblical formula* calls for **both** planting **and** watering for there to occur the desired *spiritual harvest*. The churches of Christ have done well ‘planting,’ but we have not done nearly as well ‘watering’ the seed of the kingdom. Yet, we expect God to provide the bumper crop of new Christians and multiplied congregations around the world.

Somewhat shortsighted and without a workable *exit strategy*, the churches of Christ in many cases have promoted—unintentionally—an environment among foreign brethren of **perpetual dependence**. This is evident often in the reluctance of foreign mission congregations to participate financially in any meaningful way to the extent that they

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could be responsible for local expenses. Frequently, evangelism is limited to American presence and involvement, completely ceasing upon the return of the missionary home. The lack of apparent ability and interest in reliance on foreign nationals for their own edification as well as for outreach with the Gospel is painfully obvious. The widespread absence of elderships even after decades says that something isn't working out as it ought regarding individual Christian and congregational maturity.

Therefore, the *World Evangelism Team* serving in Guyana is essentially a squad of dedicated special servants, employing unconventional methods in contradistinction to the contemporary norm for evangelism—namely, edifying, energizing and equipping Guyanese churches of Christ to shoulder some of the responsibility for evangelizing their part of the world. Our crew is comprised of both Guyanese and American Christian men and women—as **equals**—“*we are brethren*” (Genesis 13:8).

Since Guyana lacks an infrastructure of highways and is an impoverished country, it is necessary for us to take our program to assembly points in all its ten regions. Even then, attendees may travel—often by foot—for hours or perhaps days to assemble with fellow Christians. Our efforts are within reach of each of the approximate 100 congregations in Guyana, and members of most of the churches participate in our seminars and workshops.

Annually, two lecture programs, targeting different segments of the Guyanese brotherhood, travel from border to border. The “*workshop*” (e.g., “Back to the Bible,” 2018) is intended primarily for congregational edification—increasing biblical knowledge and encouragement. The “*seminar*” (e.g., “How We Got the Bible,” 2018) is for church leaders (Christian men) and workers (including sisters in Christ). This included providing preachers with **value-added** content to aid them in local work and evangelistic outreach. Each of these assemblies lasts anywhere from a few hours to several days, depending upon the degree of interest and opportunity. Evening *Gospel meetings* or “crusades” also approach Christians and non-Christians alike with the divine message and invitation of Christ.

Every year, a different academically qualified and biblically versed Guyanese preacher and I share the speaking and preaching responsibilities. It is neither necessary for me to speak more often than my Guyanese brothers nor

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for me alone to persuade audience members to obey the Gospel. We are equals; **“we are brethren.”** After all, it’s not my country; I’m the visitor, and the object is to grow the church in Guyana. Over the years, every major ethnicity among Guyanese brethren has been represented among my co-speakers. Inside the church, there is no observable racial tension, but nevertheless, we have been careful to promote ethnic harmony among Christians.

What we from America do alongside our Guyanese brethren is augmented and fortified with an extensive distribution of literature to most of the congregations in the nation. All of Guyana speaks English, though the first languages of especially remote indigenous villages are tribal dialects. Consequently, an immense amount of biblical literature and songbooks from the USA can be shipped to Guyana. New and used VBS booklets, class books, magazines, Bibles and songbooks, including many of the hundreds of titles from the World Evangelism warehouse in Winona, Mississippi, go to Guyana in a minimum of two yearly shipments. Several tons of various pieces of literature, including ***The Voice of Truth International*** magazine, valued at up to \$70,000, make their way into the hands of Christians and non-Christians all over Guyana. Brother Nigel Milo, my principle partner in Guyana, says about the widespread distribution of literature, “A whole nation is blessed because of your efforts. To God be the glory.”

There are many fine Guyanese brethren with whom it has been my pleasure to labor for Christ over the past decade. There are, though, a few brethren who particularly are my fellow team members, as it were, special operations soldiers of Christ. **First**, brother ***Nigel Milo*** (of African descent) is the Director of our workshops, seminars and Gospel meetings. He handles **all** the arrangements, attending to every detail. He is the best specimen of an evangelist with whom I am acquainted in any nation, and he excels me in every way; I’ve learned much from him, especially regarding personal evangelism. In addition to his local work, brother Milo is a televangelist—broadcasting from two of the largest cities in



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Guyana. Annually, he leads about 30 members from his congregation on evangelistic forays into the interior of the jungle country.

Secondly, brother *Thomas George* (an Amerindian) lives on the fringe of Moco Moco, beyond the “grid,” about 30 minutes from the Brazilian border. Formerly, he was the Director of a school of preaching in Lethem at the border with Brazil, and he is still an instructor there. Someone taught him the Gospel, after which, he studied the Scriptures and learned for himself the doctrine of Christ. He is very accomplished in God’s Word to the point that I would have been well pleased were everything he taught in our recent joint venues proceeded from my lips. He is a self-starter and doesn’t require any oversight.



With the aid of a used motorcycle, brother George mentors 14 Amerindian congregations that are further in the bush than he is. Brother Thomas also preaches on occasion for the Moco Moco Church of Christ. He supports his wife and himself with subsistence farming and by raising cows, pigs and chickens. It was my pleasure to direct funds into his hands to acquire the secondhand cycle, fuel money for a year and cash for the inevitably needed replacement motorcycle chain.

Thirdly, four Christian brethren (Amerindians), trained by brother George, reside in the mountainous village of Paramakatoi—also along the Brazilian border. Some of them have been traveling on foot from 8 hours to 3 days one way to other remote villages where there are members of the church. Of course, it takes approximately the same amount of time to return to their homes. Since they depend on subsistence farming on the mountainside, their own initiative to carry the Gospel to distant villages minimizes the time they have available for their farming to support their families. Happily, American




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brethren made it possible for the World Evangelism team to provide a robust ATV by which these four brothers can more expediently teach and preach in other villages some distance away. There are no roads in the areas to which they go, and so the ATV is the appropriate type of

vehicle to deploy. The acquisition of the ATV was costly, about three times more expensive than a comparable model in the USA, and we had to fly it into the mountain village at considerable expense, too.

By “Phase Two” evangelism, I refer to the second part of the formula found in 1 Corinthians 3:6—watering the seed of the kingdom. Edifying Christians may not be as glamorous as reporting about how many people one may have baptized, but it is nonetheless an essential activity of what God expects of Christians for Him to provide a spiritual harvest. Increasing congregational Bible knowledge, empowering native evangelists and passing the mantle of responsibility to foreign nationals leads to a maturing brotherhood abroad, more effective evangelism and a valid exit strategy. In partnership with Guyanese brothers, we are a squad of dedicated special servants, employing unconventional methods in contradistinction to the contemporary norm for evangelism. Our approach to evangelism promotes solid conviction, leading to genuine conversion, resulting in baptisms—with a high retention rate exceeding by far the average.

We want Guyanese Christians to **experience ownership of their Christianity** with its attendant privileges and responsibilities. It is our aim to grow the church in Guyana **from the inside out**, whereby Guyanese Christians mature individually and congregationally. This, then, becomes the foundation of congregational stability and a sustainable basis for effectively evangelizing Guyana. 

Louis Rushmore is the Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* and also of *Gospel Gazette Online*. He is a World Evangelism team member and resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

GETTING READY TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

This is the story of a little girl about nine-years-old. We will call her Marcy. Her parents had taken her to Bible school and worship services since she was born. Marcy loved to hear stories about God and Jesus, and more than anything she wanted to obey Jesus. She had seen many people baptized. Now, she was wondering when she could be baptized.

One night, her father was reading the Bible to her, and she asked him when she could be baptized. Her father explained that in God's family there are little people and big people. Little people are those who are not old enough to know about sin, and are "safe" in God's love. The big people are the ones who are old enough to know and understand about right and wrong and have been baptized for forgiveness of sin. For now, this answered Marcy's question.

However, the next day, Marcy began wondering if there was anything little people could do to show their love to Jesus. So, she went right to her mother to ask about it. "Of course, Marcy, there are many things you can do. Let me remind you of the things you are doing."

(1) When you go to Bible class every Sunday and Wednesday night, you show Jesus that you would rather be there learning about Him than anywhere in the world. And your friends can see that you put Jesus first in your life.

(2) When we give your allowance to you, you always put some back to give to God on Sunday. God knows you love Him when you give your money.

(3) Remember when you first invited Timmy to go to Bible class? He knew you loved Jesus and that you were concerned about him loving Jesus, too. That is why he started going with you every Sunday.

(4) You always show respect and obedience to the policeman. When we obey the laws of the land, we are obeying Jesus.

HEY YOU KIDS

(5) When little Janet was sick, you took her flowers. Jesus knew you loved Him because you were concerned about others.


(6) When Mrs. Brown needed someone to run an errand, why do you think she asked you? She knew you are kind and helpful like Jesus wants you to be.

(7) Your school teacher tells us that you are quick to obey her, that you are kind and always say “please” and “thank you.” She knows that you are getting ready to be a Christian.

(8) Marcy, when you play with your friends, you always take turns. This is the reason you have so many friends. They know you share the way Jesus taught us. So, they enjoy playing with you.”

Now, little Marcy was so pleased and happy. She was sure she could do many things to show Jesus she loved Him and desired to always obey Him. Until she was old enough to be baptized, she would just keep on getting ready.

To become a Christian, we need to **study and read the Bible** (2 Timothy 2:15), **believe that Jesus is the Son of God** (Hebrews 11:6), **repent of our sins** (Acts 2:38), confess our faith in Jesus (Romans 10:9-10) and **be baptized for the remission of sins** (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Jesus used little children as examples of what people must be like to go to Heaven.

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). 



Glad Tidings of Good Things; www.housetohouse.com

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

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (Page 36)

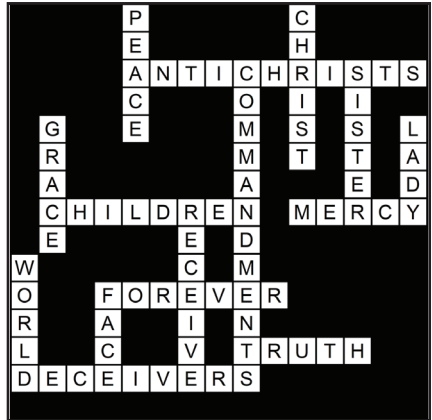
1. Imitate, imitate
2. They remembered Paul and kept the traditions they had been taught.
3. Christ
4. God
5. Christ
6. Her husband
7. Glory, glory.
8. Man
9. False
10. nature
11. Glory and covering
12. No

Scavenger Hunt (page 87)

Answers:

1. to save sinners (1:15)
2. Alexander and Hymenaeus (1:19-20)
3. all men, kings, all in authority (2:1-2)
4. Christ Jesus (2:5)

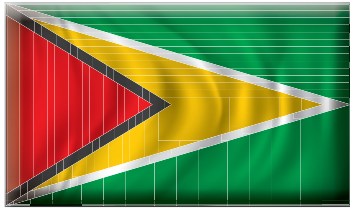
Bible Find (page 44)



5. bishops (elders) and deacons (3:1-13)
6. the house of God/the church of God (3:15)
7. godliness (4:8)
8. 2 or 3 witnesses (5:19)
9. great gain (6:6)
10. the love of money (6:10)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

GUYANA, SOUTH AMERICA



There are about 102 congregations in Guyana, comprised of approximately 5,000 members with about 90 preachers. The congregations are scattered throughout the entire country and are made up of all three major ethnic groups (i.e., East Indians, Africans and the indigenous Amerindians). The nation's population as well as the churches of Christ and most of their preachers are in greater number along the narrow coastal strip of land parallel to the Atlantic Ocean. Dozens of American brethren descend on Guyana annually, mostly in various localized outreach and evangelistic programs. In addition, World Evangelism Team members conduct annual, nationwide, mobile seminars and workshops throughout Guyana. They concentrate on watering the seed of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 3:6) and "equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America, and it is a small country, well within the capability of being impacted significantly in our lifetime with the Gospel of Christ.