

VOLUME ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



**No matter how many doors of communication
Satan tries to close, our God opens more!**

Speak Where the Bible Speaks

Words and Music
by: Paul Mays

Refrain

Speak where the Bi - ble speaks be si - lent, where the Bi - ble's si - lent

1. do Bi - ble things, in Bi - ble ways 2. call Bi - ble things, by Bi - ble names.

1. We must have au - thor - i - ty for all things re - li - gious. We must have au - thor - i - ty from God's own word

Thus sa - ith the Lord should drive all of our choi - ces, when wor - ship - ping the Fa - ther who cre - a - ted all.

2. Our love of the Fa - ther is shown in our choi - ces, It's shown when we strive to o - bey His word.
3. God loves us en - ough to re - veal what's ex - pect - ed, His Church is de - scribed in His ho - ly word.

We lead by ex - am - ple when we off - er prai - ses, When wor - ship - ping the Fa - ther who cre - a - ted all.
The or - der, the prac - tice, the doc - trine, and re - verence; we wor - ship - ping the Fa - ther who cre - a - ted all.

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Paul Mays is a Christian hymn writer who resides in Roanoke, Virginia, USA. Visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/neanderpaul> to listen to the hymns.



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

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God provides for our needs, not for our greed. ~ Cecil May, Jr.



The Greater Tragedy

Louis Rushmore

Dictionaries define “tragedy” as, “a disastrous event: calamity” (“Tragedy,” *Merriam-Webster*) or “a lamentable, dreadful, or fatal event or affair... disaster” (“Tragedy,” *Dictionary.com*). There have been too many tragedies throughout human history to even begin to list them, but let us briefly note a few of them to demonstrate the nature of human tragedies that, unfortunately, have plagued and will continue to beset mankind.

The American Civil War spanned the years 1861 to 1865, and between 620,000 to 850,000 died directly and indirectly as a result (Nasaw). That tragedy was one of the topmost catastrophic events ever to transpire in the western hemisphere, and its ramifications continue to this day in the United States of America.

“The RMS **Titanic**, a luxury steamship, sank in the early hours of April 15, 1912, off the coast of Newfoundland in the North Atlantic after sideswiping an iceberg during its maiden voyage [from South Hampton, England to New York, USA]. Of the 2,240 passengers and crew [of 900] on board, more than 1,500 lost their lives in the disaster.” Only about 705 persons survived” (“Titanic”).

The **Titanic** and the **Lusitania** were the two largest luxury ocean liners ever constructed at the time they were put into service. “**Lusitania** met its tragic end on May 7, 1915, when a torpedo fired by a German U-boat sunk the ship, killing nearly 1,200 of the 1,959 people on board and precipitating the United States’ entry into World War I” (“Titanic”).

World War I from 1914 to 1918 resulted in 20 million deaths, a little over half of whom were civilians. **World War II** from 1939 to 1945 caused over 70 million deaths, over 50 million of whom were civilians.

Interestingly, “war is defined as an active conflict that has claimed more than 1,000 lives. ...Of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history. ... At least 108 million people were killed in wars in the twentieth century. Estimates for the total number killed in wars throughout all of human history range from 150 million to 1 billion” (Hedges).

The infamous **9/11** stunned a nation and the world.

During the September 11 attacks of the year 2001, 2,977 people were killed, 19 hijackers committed murder-suicide, and more than 6,000 others were injured. The immediate deaths included 265 on the four planes (including the terrorists), 2,606 in the World Trade Center and in the surrounding area, and 125 at the Pentagon. The attacks remain the deadliest terrorist act in world history. Most of those who perished were civilians except for 343 firefighters, 71 law enforcement officers who died in the World Trade Center and on the ground in New York City, and another law enforcement officer who died when United Airlines Flight 93 crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, 55 military personnel who died at the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia, and the 19 terrorists who died on board the four aircraft. Of the 2,977 people who died, 2,605 were U.S. citizens and 372 non-U.S. citizens (excluding the 19 perpetrators). More than 90 countries lost citizens in the attacks, including the United Kingdom (67 deaths), the Dominican Republic (47 deaths), and India (41 deaths). As of August 2013, medical authorities concluded that 1,140 people who worked, lived, or studied in Lower Manhattan at the time of the attack have been diagnosed with cancer as a result of “exposure to toxins at Ground Zero.” It has been reported that over 1,400 9/11 rescue workers who responded to the scene in the days and months after the attacks have since died. At least 11 pregnancies were lost as a result of 9/11. (“Casualties”)

Thousands upon thousands of tragedies, some beyond imagination by sane and civilized people, have been perpetrated by humans against fellow humans. However, irrespective of any particular tragedy, noted or not noted herein, or the combination of all perceived tragedies, there is a

greater tragedy than any other or even all tragedies put together.

“Roughly 100,825,272,791 people have ever died” (Chalabi). The majority of mankind, lamentably, will be lost, according to Jesus. *“Enter by*

the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”

(Matthew 7:13-14




NKJV). Over thousands of years, God established three successive, unilateral, obligatory covenants with man: Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity.

God devised a plan, by which though He is completely holy and pure, to have fellowship with His wayward creation – sinful man. God’s scheme dates back to before time began (Titus 1:2-3; Proverbs 8:23-31; 1 Peter 1:20-23). The climax of God’s provision is to have fellowship with man and for those who are in fellowship with Him also to have fellowship with each other (1 John 1:3). The facilitator of this three-way fellowship is the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:3-6) or the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15) or Testament (Hebrews 9:16-17). Hence, all amenable souls living today must obey the Gospel to benefit from God’s grand plan (Romans 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17).

The crux of the Gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Obeying the Gospel culminates initially in imitating the death, burial and resurrection of Christ by undergoing Christian baptism (Romans 6:3-8). Continued obedience of the Gospel will result in eternal salvation and a home in Heaven (Revelation 2:10). Our Lord, the Son of God, who died a horrible and torturous death by crucifixion, is the Savior of the obedient (Hebrews 5:9).

The greater tragedy than all other tragedies combined is dying

outside of a covenant relationship with our Creator – Almighty God.

What could be more tragic than unnecessarily spending eternity in Hell, which was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41)? Maybe even worse, many precious souls who were once saved and who entertained the hope of spending forever in Heaven will turn away from God and return to lives of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22; Matthew 13:18-23). **There is no greater tragedy than dying lost in sin**, especially when God the Father provided a master plan for man’s redemption, God the Son made a vicarious sacrifice of Himself for us, and God the Holy Spirit stipulated the roadmap to eternal Heaven through divine inspiration of the Bible’s penmen. There are some tragedies in this world that are unavoidable, but everyone can avoid **the greater tragedy** of being eternally lost. What will you do? 

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Louis Rushmore is the Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*. He has been preaching since 1973 in the USA and abroad as well as authored several books and tracts. He resides in Ocala, Florida, USA.



Choose You This Day

Jerry Bates

We make choices every day. Most of those choices are insignificant and have little influence over the rest of our lives. Other choices are more important; their influence may last for years. There is one choice that is most significant, and that is whether to serve God. The consequence of this choice

lasts for eternity.

Several times in Scripture, God encouraged men to choose to serve Him. Near the end of his life, Moses placed a choice before the people of Israel. ***“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live”*** (Deuteronomy 30:19). Moses pointed out to the people that there was a choice they needed to make, and the difference was life and death. It seems that they never really made a choice, because they continued to try to serve both God and idols. Near the end of his life, Joshua spoke to the people of Israel and made a final effort to persuade them to resolve to follow God. ***“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”*** (Joshua 24:15). Once again, we see that Joshua encouraged the people to make a choice.

The New Testament places a similar choice before us. We have before us life or death, a blessing or a curse. We would think that no one would choose death; however, multitudes are doing that very thing today. Why?


There are probably a multitude of reasons, but one big reason is that many do not really make a choice. They may say that one day they will commit their lives to God and serve Him, but they plan to do it later. Oftentimes, that day never comes. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:2, *“For he says, In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”* Paul encourages us to make the correct choice **today**. God will not accept second place in our lives.



Notice that there is a time element to this choice. Joshua said to choose *“this day.”* Paul said, *“now is the day of salvation.”* We must make a choice, and we need to do it today. This choice is not always going to be open as time may close this door of choice. We may die before we make the choice. Young people often think they have plenty of time to choose because they are young. However, we know that is not a reliable indicator of the time of death; young people die every day. Even if you are fortunate to live many years, your heart may become too hardened by sin to commit to God. The writer of Hebrews pointed this out in Hebrews 3:13 when he penned, *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*

Notice also that we must make a choice. By failing to make a choice to serve God completely, one makes a choice. Multitudes attempt to go through life without really deciding. People live for the moment, never deciding about the future. They figure that they will deal with the future when the future arrives. However, the state of our future existence is determined by the decision that we make now. **“Now”** is the accepted time to make that decision. One day the decision will be taken from us, and we will then suffer the consequences of the choice that we have made.

For centuries, the Jewish people tried to serve both God and idols, but it never worked. Several centuries after both Moses and Joshua, Elijah placed a similar choice before Israel on Mt. Carmel. **“And Elijah came to all the people and said, How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people answered him not a word”** (1 Kings 18:21). The people of Israel tried to follow both God and Baal, and Elijah was placing an obvious choice before the people. Immediately after this saying, we read of the contest between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal, which resulted in a clear victory for God. Nevertheless, it seemed to have made little difference in the attitude of the people.

Even today, people continue to try to serve God **and** the world. **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money]”** (Matthew 6:24). We must decide and do it today, because one day it will be too late. Jeremiah told the people of his day that it was too late for them. He wrote, **“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved”** (Jeremiah 8:20). It was too late for his people because the nation was about to go into captivity. The same is true of us. One day it will be too late for us. The decision will then be taken away from us. We have before us the way of death and the way of salvation. The way of death is the broad way, and many are traveling that road. The way of life is narrow, and there are few traveling that road (Matthew 7:13-14). We are all traveling one of those roads. On which road are you traveling? Choose today which road you want. 

Jerry Bates is a missionary, Gospel preacher and one of the editors of the quarterly magazine *The Voice of Truth International*. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



PARADOXES OF CHRISTIANITY: THE SAME YET DIFFERENT

Shane Fisher

A paradox is “a statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd, yet in fact expresses a possible truth” (www.dictionary.com). The Bible contains many paradoxes that unveil great truths. The paradox we want to examine is that the Bible affirms absolute truths, *some of which are the same, yet different.*

The Same God, Yet Different Ways of Revealing His Will

God is an eternal Being with infinite attributes (Psalm 90:2). However, God chose to reveal His mind in several ways in the recent past. Hebrews 1:1-2 states, “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.*” (1) God **spoke directly** to people at times –Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:9-17); (2) God communicated through **dreams** (Genesis 20:3; 31:11); (3) God communicated in **visions** (Genesis 15:1; Numbers 12:6); (4) God spoke through **the Urim and Thummim** (Exodus 28:30); (5) God inspired certain men to be **prophets** (2 Peter 1:20-21). Ultimately, Jesus, who is God in the flesh, came (John 1:14). Jesus was given all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18). He delegated authority through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets to reveal the **confirmed and permanent written will of God** that was once for all delivered in the first century A.D. (Acts 2:1-4; Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 2:1-4; 8:8-13; Jude 3).

The Same God, Yet Different Covenants

There are several covenants given in the Bible, but the main two that stand out are known as the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ (Hebrews 8:8-13). The Law of Moses was given in the 1400s B.C. (Deuteronomy 5:1-3). It was made with the nation of Israel and was temporary (Galatians 3:16-25). It was a shadow of things to come (Hebrews 10:1-4). Jesus came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-18). He did so at the cross in A.D. 30, and the Law of Moses was done away (Hebrews 9:15-17; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14-17). Jesus gave a New Covenant that is binding upon all people (Isaiah 2:1-4; Matthew 26:28), and it is everlasting (Hebrews 13:20). This New Covenant is the substance to which the shadows of the Law of Moses pointed (Colossians 2:14-17). It provides a superior priesthood (Hebrews 7:11-28), provides an assurance of a greater hope (Hebrews 4:1-6) and offers the absolute forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 10:1-4). While there are many *principles* (faith, obedience, love, the nature of God, etc.), *historical lessons* (1 Corinthians 10:1-11), and *background information* (Leviticus) that need to be gleaned from the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 15:4), we are no longer bound by its *specific legal details* (sabbaths, feasts, dietary laws, etc.).

The Same Jesus, Yet Different Status

Jesus was to sit at the right hand of the Father after He ascended into Heaven (Hebrews 1:1-3). He is reigning as King of kings at this time (1 Timothy 6:15). How long will Jesus reign over His present kingdom? First Corinthians 15:24-28 states:

*Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For “He has put all things under His feet.” But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, **then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.***

Jesus did not **only** make of Himself a sin sacrifice, resulting in His immeasurable pain and agony (2 Corinthians 5:21), but He chose to

willingly abide in a submissive status to the Father **after** He delivers His kingdom (i.e., reign) back to Him. Jesus will continue to identify with humanity forever. He is the God-man. This is in complete harmony with other passages that confirm He serves as our Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). He is not ashamed to call us His brethren (Hebrews 2:9-11). Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). Paul affirms that we are joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

The Same Book, Yet Different Materials

The Bible did not come down to us in a golden parachute as one of my college professors said. The Bible shares a long history of transmission that was written on different materials across the centuries. Part of it was written on stone (the Ten Commandments, Exodus 31:18), clay, leather, papyrus and parchment. A person ought to visit the website, *The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts* (www.csntm.org) to see all the copies of New Testament manuscripts that have been captured digitally for future generations to look back on for research. Those manuscripts were hand copied for centuries until the Gutenberg printing press in the A.D. 1400s, which made it possible to distribute literature more efficiently. Technology has come such a long way, enabling us now to view the Bible on our electronic tablets and cell phones. Indeed, the Word of God does stand forever. 1 Peter 1:22-25 records:

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 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, but the word of the LORD endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

The Same Saving Message, Yet Different Methods and Tools


The Gospel is the only way in which people can be saved from their sins. Romans 1:16 states, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also*

for the Greek.” It is truly remarkable to see the many ways to spread the Gospel today. World Evangelism focuses on the foreign television, radio programs and literature (tracts, books, magazines, etc.). We are now even expanding to have those books and tracts in PDF format for brethren to download so that they can share with their friends and neighbors. We are also filming digital videos to be placed on YouTube and Rumble for brethren and non-Christians to view anywhere in the world they have internet access. Other great brotherhood works are using podcasts, Amazon Prime, Roku, etc. to spread the truth. I have found, though, many brethren, unfortunately, do not take the initiative to learn how to use these tools more effectively. **Brethren, will you please learn how to utilize these materials in spreading the Gospel?**

The Same Person, Yet Different Mindset

We see a person who desires to obey the Gospel go down into the water, being immersed, that same human is raised up out of the water. From an earthly perspective, nothing has changed (i.e., their normal, physical appearance is the same). However, those who have truly been convicted that they are sinners in need of a Savior (Romans 3:23), who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 8:24), repented of their sins (Acts 17:30), confessed to live for Him the rest of their lives (Romans 10:9-10) and were baptized into Him for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) – **now have a different mindset.** They realize they have put to death that old man of sin (Romans 6:3-7). They are no longer that person they used to be. They are a new creation in Christ. They have been made new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Colossians 3:1-3 states, *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”*

Let us resolve in our hearts and minds to keep on having that different mindset that separates ourselves from the worldly system we have left behind (1 John 2:15-17). 

Shane Fisher is one of the editors of *The Voice of Truth International*, a missionary and works with World Evangelism. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



FOUNDING EDITOR



1932—2008



J.C. Choate

We are asking an important question: How does one *“Put off the old man of sin, and put on the new man of righteousness?”* In other words, we need to see how we can leave the world of sin behind and replace that life with righteousness by entering the church of Christ, which is the spiritual body of Christ.

We are living in a time when the word “sin” has almost disappeared from our vocabulary. Nowadays, the drunkard is an alcoholic, the one who is hooked on drugs is a drug addict, the homosexual has simply taken an alternative lifestyle, and on and on it goes with a whole list of other acts that used to be labeled as sinful. However, I have news for you. Those things are still wrong, and they are still listed as sins in God’s Word. Just because they are not called by their rightful names by society and acknowledged to be sins, that doesn’t mean that they are not sins. They can be whitewashed and dressed up with nice-sounding terms and names, but they are still sins in God’s eyes and in the eyes of His people.

These sins are referred to in the Scriptures as the works of the flesh, and some of these are said to be *“adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like”* (Galatians 5:19-21). Paul said that those unrighteous people

cannot enter the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). John wrote:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Further, the apostle Paul penned:

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Again, Paul wrote:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowlodge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7)

What is sin? It is simply a transgression of the law of God, as well as the law of man. John wrote:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abi-

deth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:4-8)

John taught that Christ came into this world, was without sin and gave Himself that man might be saved from sin. Our Lord also came so the works of the devil might be destroyed.

Paul declared, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Again, he said, *“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him”* (Romans 5:8-9). In Romans 6:23, Paul wrote, *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Speaking of the world to come, John wrote, *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* (Revelation 21:8).

Do you recognize the sins that have been listed, as well as all of the others that are in the world? Have you seen any of these things around you – in your friends, in family members, even in yourself? Have you also seen what these sins will do, even in this life, for those who commit them? They will hurt you and cause you problems. Sins can destroy you and your family in countless ways, both physically and spiritually. They can send your soul to hell.

So, what can be done about all of this? Must one go on suffering for the sins he has committed, subsequently to live and to die without God and without hope? Is there any way to rid oneself of sin, to be forgiven and to have a better life? Yes, but there is a price to pay. Christ died for **you** – that you might be saved – but in order for you to have salvation, you must give up all of your sins and obey Him. It is just that simple, and **there is no other way to be saved**. Obedience to God shouldn't really be hard when one realizes that a person simply must give up everything that is destructive and exchange them for everything that is good!

The Bible describes a person in sin as being *“the old man of sin.”*

It further describes those who have obeyed God as having put on **“the new man of righteousness”** in Christ Jesus. This change is brought about through one’s faith in God, by repenting – turning away from the life of sin, confessing Christ as the Son of God and being baptized or buried in water for the forgiveness of sins.

Let’s read from Romans 6 to see how this works. Paul penned:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (Romans 6:1-10)

In the foregoing, Paul showed that Christ died on the cross, was buried in the tomb and was then resurrected to life. In a sinner’s obedience to the Gospel, he mirrors what our Lord did for us: he dies to his sins, that is, he repents of them; then he is buried in water to wash away those sins and, in his obedience, he is cleansed by the blood of Christ; finally, he comes up out of the water as a new creature, a new person in Christ. This is our spiritual “new birth” (John 3:3-5). Paul concluded, **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”** (2 Corinthians 5:17).

As we turn to Colossians 3, Paul wrote to Christians at Colosse:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your

life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. (Colossians 3:1-17)

Now, in the words of the Scriptures, I think you can see that when one puts off the old man of sin through his obedience to the Lord, he changes his total behavior and attitudes. He adds good and wholesome qualities that make this physical life worth living and that give him an eternal life to anticipate. We must obey God in order to receive that promised reward. ✚

J. C. Choate (1932-2008) was the Founding Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.





From the Crib to the Cross

Byron Nichols

It is common near the end of each year to frequently see or hear reference made to the **crib**, that is, the crib of the Christ child. It's not very common during that season to hear or see as much said or written about the **cross** of Christ. Let's take a look at these two very different objects that played such prominent parts in the earthly existence of Christ.

The **Crib** and Beyond

That **crib** scene there in Bethlehem certainly had its mystery and intrigue, its excitement, and its likely continuing questions on the part of each of the new parents involved. Even though Mary had been given a partial explanation by the angel Gabriel as to the very special role that she was to play in becoming the mother of the Son of God, it still must have been a matter of some concern to her. She was very willing to do all she could to be and do what God desired of her, but surely, she still felt somewhat insecure and unqualified at times.

Joseph likewise had had an encounter with an angel and was assured that he had no reason to refrain from continuing his planned marriage to Mary. The angel also told him briefly the astonishing news of just who Joseph's son (Luke 3:23) would be.

The Son of God's entrance into this world was accompanied by the adoration of the shepherds and the wise men. In grave contrast, this birth also brought about the death of other male children of Bethlehem, all

because of the brutal decree of King Herod. Some thirty-three years later, other men in high places who were fearful and insecure would finally succeed in doing to a grown man what Herod had been unable to do to a small infant. Thus, God's Son went from a **crib**, surrounded by threatening danger, to ultimately wind up being nailed to a Roman **cross**.



The Years Between the **Crib** and the **Cross**

It doesn't require a lot of searching or deep study to learn very quickly that Christ's ministry or service here on earth was full of attention given to folks who were unacquainted with the limelight. Many of them were socially and economically deprived. Jesus mixed and mingled with the forgotten, the ignored and the shunned. He had no qualms about associating with and eating with sinners of various kinds, with tax collectors and people of public disdain.

Jesus made known that God is a loving Father who didn't pick and choose who He wanted to bless or save, but rather He caused the sunshine to be enjoyed by all, and He made the rain to fall on both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). The apostle Peter found out the hard way that God doesn't play favorites, as we read Peter's words in Acts 10:34, ***"...In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality."***

Christ used His life to demonstrate the beauty and the necessity of love for

the Father, and also the wisdom of trusting in the promises of God. Jesus was so full of love for the Father that He of His own accord **chose** to go to the **cross** rather than disappoint His Father by turning His back on His earthly mission of exemplifying and sharing the love of God with all who would listen.

Both the **Crib** and the **Cross** Reveal God with Us

In Matthew 1:23, Matthew quoted from Isaiah's prophecy regarding the birth of Christ as found in Isaiah 7:14. It says, "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel...*" Then Matthew added, "*which is translated, 'God with us.'*" Thus, God was in the midst of men even in the form of that baby in the **crib** in Bethlehem. Several years later Paul proclaimed to the men of Athens at Mars Hill that God "*is not far from each one of us*" (Acts 17:27).

The Bible affirms that God is **omnipresent**, which means that He is present everywhere simultaneously, and **thus He is most assuredly with us!**

Even at the **cross** the Father made His presence and His power known. (1) He cast the whole world into darkness for a period of three hours. (2) He caused the veil in the Temple to be torn in two from top to bottom. (3) He caused the earth to quake, with numerous graves being opened, and many saints were raised from their graves (after Jesus' resurrection). Yes indeed, God was in their midst.

What a name – "Immanuel" – "God with us"! Just as He was with men in the first century, so He is with us even today. As important as the **crib** was, it also served to mark the beginning of a journey destined to end at the **cross**. The **cross** was a humiliating spectacle, yet it marked the culmination of a life lived totally for the benefit of others. †

Byron Nichols is Editor Emeritus of *The Voice of Truth International*. He resides in Springfield, Missouri, USA.



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HEBREWS 5:8-9 SAYS,
“THOUGH HE WERE A SON, YET LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS WHICH HE SUFFERED; (9) AND BEING MADE PERFECT, HE BECAME THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION
UNTO ALL THEM THAT OBEY HIM...”

WOULD YOU OBEY JESUS TO BE SAVED?

HEAR HIS WORD: JOHN 6:45 — “IT IS WRITTEN IN THE PROPHETS, AND THEY SHALL BE ALL TAUGHT OF GOD. EVERY MAN THEREFORE THAT HATH HEARD, AND HATH LEARNED OF THE FATHER, COMETH UNTO ME”

BELIEVE ON HIM: JOHN 8:24 — “I SAID THEREFORE UNTO YOU, THAT YE SHALL DIE IN YOUR SINS: FOR IF YE BELIEVE NOT THAT I AM HE, YE SHALL DIE IN YOUR SINS.”

REPENT OF SINS: LUKE 13:3,5 — “I TELL YOU, NAY: BUT, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH.”
CONFESS FAITH IN HIM: MATTHEW 10:32 — “WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I CONFESS ALSO BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.”

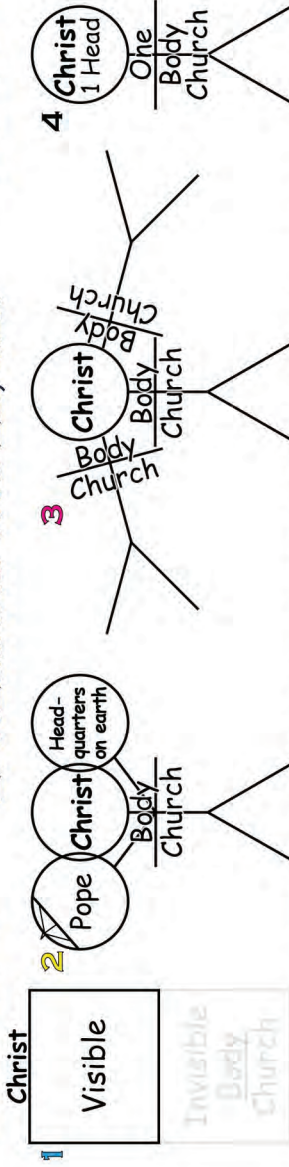
BE BAPTIZED: MARK 16:16 — “HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED.”

BE FAITHFUL: REVELATION 2:10 — “FEAR NONE OF THOSE THINGS WHICH THOU SHALT SUFFER: BEHOLD, THE DEVIL SHALL CAST SOME OF YOU INTO PRISON, THAT YE MAY BE TRIED; AND YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION TEN DAYS: BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.”

THE CHURCH IS HIS BODY

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND EPHESIANS 1:19-23; 4:4?

THERE IS ONE BODY



1. NOT IN BIBLE. THE VISIBLE/INVISIBLE CHURCH DOCTRINE TEACHES TWO CHURCHES. EPHESIANS 1:22-23; 4:4, SAYS THERE IS ONLY ONE. SOME SAY THE VISIBLE CHURCH IS THE MYRIAD OF DENOMINATIONS ON EARTH — PRACTICING THEIR MYRIAD OF DIFFERING DOCTRINES — WORSHIPING IN THEIR MYRIAD OF DIFFERENT WAYS. THE INVISIBLE CHURCH, THEY SAY, IS COMPRISED OF ALL THE REDEEMED FROM ALL VISIBLE CHURCHES, EVEN THOUGH THESE CHURCHES OFTEN CANNOT EVEN AGREE ON WHAT, WHEN, OR HOW ONE IS SAVED. SOME OF THESE CHURCHES VOTE YOU IN OR OUT OF THEIR CHURCH. ONLY GOD HAS THE AUTHORITY TO ADD A SOUL TO HIS CHURCH (ACTS 2:47). SUCH IS BASED ON THEIR OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL (BEING SAVED), WHICH IS DESCRIBED IN ACTS 2:41 (SEE MARK 16:15-16).

2. NOT IN BIBLE. THIS IS THE CURRENT STATE OF CATHOLICISM AND THE MYRIAD OF DENOMINATIONS THAT EXIST. THEY CLAIM CHRIST AS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (HEAVEN), YET THEY ESTABLISH THEIR OWN DIFFERING AUTHORITATIVE HEADQUARTERS ON EARTH. ANY EARTHLY HEADQUARTERS OR AUTHORITY BEYOND CHRIST IN HEAVEN IS AN ADDITION TO GOD'S WORD AND CONDEMNED BY THE SAME (REVELATION 22:18-19).

3. NOT IN BIBLE. THE CONCEPT OF A SINGLE HEAD (CHRIST) WITH MANY DENOMINATIONAL BODIES IS FALSE AND FREAKISH. THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST (EPHESIANS 5:22-33; REVELATION 21:1-2). THIS CONCEPT ACCUSES CHRIST OF ADULTERY, SINCE EACH DENOMINATION IS OBVIOUSLY A DIFFERENT BRIDE—EACH ONE WEARING DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONAL CLOTHING (DOCTRINES/PRACTICES/WORSHIP) THAT DISTINGUISH ONE FROM ANOTHER.

4. THIS IS THE BIBLE VIEW OF THE CHURCH. JESUS IS THE ONLY HEAD OF HIS ONLY BODY, THE CHURCH. THE CHURCH IS NOT INVISIBLE, BUT IS MADE UP OF SAVED PEOPLE (1 PETER 2:5). HER DOCTRINE, PRACTICE, AND WORSHIP IS THE SAME WHEREVER YOU FIND HER (1 CORINTHIANS 4:17). THE BODY OF CHRIST IS PRE-DENOMINATIONAL. WE SPEAK THE SAME THING (1 CORINTHIANS 1:10). THERE SHOULD BE NO DIVISION IN HER (1 CORINTHIANS 12:25). THE AUTHORITY FOR THE CHURCH COMES FROM CHRIST THROUGH THE REVEALED WORD, THE NEW TESTAMENT. HEED THE WARNING OF MATTHEW 15:7-13.

The Electric Eel - God's Taser

David Everson



The electric eel (*Electrophorus electricus*) is indeed an amazing creation. God in His infinite wisdom came close with the creation of this fish to stretching the limits of man's imagination with the abilities He designed into this animal. Let's take a look at the new, recent discoveries about the electric eel.

As a predator in the waterways of South America, it is capable of unleashing a potent electrical jolt to zap its prey helpless. However, this zap is not used merely to stun other fish as has been thought for many years. Its abilities go far beyond just a mere stunning discharge. Indeed, the Master Designer gave eels abilities far beyond something that crude. Let's look at the electric eel and marvel at the Designer's handiwork.

For people not familiar with electric eels, they have serpentine bodies with flattened heads and can reach lengths of 6 to 8 feet. They are native

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to the Amazon and Orinoco river basins. They possess electric organs with specialized cells called electrocytes that serve as the biological batteries that can generate and discharge up to 600 volts to subdue prey and defend against their predators. This God-given ability is amazing, but it is nothing in light of the studies about their use and control of this electrical ability.

New studies have shown that eels use electrical generating ability to exert a form of remote control over their victims, causing fish that may be hiding to twitch when a small electrical discharge is emitted. This, then, exposes the location of fish for easy hunting, or induces an involuntary muscle contraction that may incapacitate the prey.

Studies show how the electrical discharges remotely activate the prey's neurons, or nerve cells, that control the muscles. As the eel hunts, it periodically gives off two high-voltage pulses separated by a very brief pause. This causes a massive involuntary twitch in nearby hidden prey, and the eels, who are hypersensitive to water movements, can detect this motion caused by the twitch, learning the other fish's location. The eel can or will deliver a full blast of a longer, high-voltage shock to immobilize prey by massive involuntary muscle contractions. It is much like a discharged taser; this paralyzes muscles, thus enabling an easy capture by the eel. One scientist has said about electric eels, "Although they are not known to kill people, they are capable of incapacitating humans, horses and obviously fish during their electric discharge."

In addition to taking control of the muscles of its prey and then "tasering" them, the electric eel can also use its abilities to navigate through the rivers in which it lives. As the eel swims, it periodically gives off a low-voltage pulse that seems to work as sort of a radar system for navigating dark and murky water.

We see the Master Designer has created amazing abilities in a lowly fish that modern man has just discovered in the past 20 years. God created eels with these traits with living cells and not mechanical equipment. Let us be in awe and give praise to Him who created all things for His pleasure.✝

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.

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What If?

Betty Burton Choate

For a few minutes, let's play a pretend game. I open my eyes. I've never seen this world before, nor do I know anything about the "body" in which I find myself. In my mind, there is no yesterday, not even a real consciousness of what time, space and matter are. My mind is flooded with the questions, "Who am I?" "What am I?" "What is all of this around me?" "I am totally adrift in an existence of unknowns!"

Move forward to 2022. I wake in the morning and open my eyes to my familiar world. I know my body, my joys, my aches and pains, my family, my day-to-day life, my work and my history. I even know world history, going back thousands of years. My mind is flooded with awareness.

These are two entirely different scenarios, but they hold one major thing in common: throughout the history of humans, regardless of how much or how little was known, there has grown an awareness within the soul (even if the existence of "the soul" was not clearly known) of an empty hole within. Historically, regardless of how primitive and uninformed a group might be, in humanity's struggle to fill that hole, mankind carved and worshipped "gods."

Today, there are still primitive, isolated tribal groups that build their gods and worship them. In contrast, there are highly educated people who totally decry any idea of "god." They look around at everything that exists and see themselves – humans – as the most intelligent beings in existence. Consequently, they elevate themselves upon their own altars and worship themselves.

However, now, look at the starkness of reality. We have a book called "the Bible." More copies of it have been circulated throughout the world, in more languages, than any other book. It claims to have been written by men who were directed by the Holy Spirit – one member of the Godhead, Who is introduced and explained in its pages. God used about 40 men to do the writing over a period of 1500 years. If humans had done this, it would be filled with errors and contradictions, and yet, the Bible is one amazing and coherent narrative from beginning to end!


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What is its theme? It answers those questions that the first man, Adam, must have had when he opened his eyes. Immediately, his Creator made Himself known to him. No human mind could then or can now comprehend the greatness and the power of God.

Yes, He cares about miniscule details that would seem unimportant to humans. Look closely at a despised little weed growing in your yard. We can't see them with the naked eye, but it is a fact that every living thing is made up of cells that function exactly as they were designed to do, to enable the "thing" to live and to do whatever it was created to do – interacting and interwoven with the entire creation.

The human body is made up of about 37.2 trillion cells, and every cell is made up of 100 trillion atoms, but according to scientists, atoms are made up of protons, neutrons and electrons, which are even smaller! Every living thing is composed of these zillions of immeasurable tiny things! Furthermore, every particle of every living thing has its own job to do, working together with all the other particles, so that the body of a flower, the body of a beetle or the body of a human functions precisely as it was designed to do! What amazing wonders take place continually in all of life – amazing things entirely beyond our comprehension, and yet they go on automatically, even without one's mental awareness that it is happening!

Who had the intelligence and the power to bring all of this into existence? Who could create the endlessness of the *known* universe? Who would be concerned enough about details to create the tiniest of miniscule particles that make up living matter? The answer is in that amazing revelation, the Bible: ***“In the beginning GOD...”***

Who am I? I am a human, made in the image of my Creator God. **What am I?** A physical body imbued with an immortal soul that will never die. **What is all of this around me?** God's unfathomable universe, created by His mighty hand! Because of my love and obedience to Him, and the sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ, for me, I will be going to that *new heaven and new earth* when I leave this world, never to die again, living always in His presence! 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder of *The Voice of Truth International*. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Does Belief in Jesus Matter?

Arlis Richardson

If a person is interested in going to Heaven, it most definitely does matter what one believes about Jesus. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

There are those who claim to believe in Jesus as being a true person that walked this earth, but some believe He was just another great religious leader. Still others believe He was a prophet like Jeremiah, Daniel or Moses. Jesus Himself left no doubt that He was more than any of these. *“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’”* (Matthew 16:13 NKJV). *“So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets’”* (Matthew 16:14).

None of these, of course, were true, although people believed in Jesus to an extent. However, our Lord wanted to firmly establish in the minds of His followers exactly Who He was (and is). *“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”* (Matthew 16:15). *“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’”* (Matthew 16:16). This is **what** must be believed about Jesus, as shown by our Lord’s next words, *“... ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it’”* (Matthew 16:17-18).

Jesus was stating that upon the very truth Peter uttered – that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God – His church would be built. That church is composed of people who have acknowledged that same

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truth that Peter recognized. Romans 10:10 reads, *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* What is to be confessed? *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32-33). That confession is the same made by the eunuch in Acts 8:37, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* The next verse shows that the eunuch subsequently was baptized.

In summary, a person might believe “in Jesus” but not believe that He is the Son of God. However, if a person wants to live in eternity in Heaven, he must accept the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Inherent in that belief is all that Jesus taught and did. Yes, it most definitely matters what one believes about Jesus. †

Arlis Richardson has preached for decades for the churches of Christ in the USA, and is now deceased.



Robison's Rubies

Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6 NKJV). Everybody has some kind of acquaintance (some more than others) with thirst for water and hunger for

food. If those go too long, they are tragically painful and deadly. It would seem there is nothing worse. The instinct of hunger and thirst is built into humankind so that people will get their needed nourishment. Hunger and thirst for righteousness, though, is a choice. It seems many people just go with the way of the world and care little about justice, goodness, kindness and righteousness. The world needs people who hunger and thirst for righteousness. I personally need to hunger and thirst for righteousness. There is a precious promise from the Bread of Life that anyone who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be filled.

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The Goodness of God

Samuel Osei Young

Introduction

One of the most encouraging and challenging topics of the Bible to study is “The Goodness of God.” When we know that God is good, we can and must live with love and kindness in our hearts toward others. As Christians, we are to be good and to do good because God is good. What does it mean to say that God is good? Let us see what the Bible has to say on this topic.

Matthew 19:16-17 tells us of a conversation Jesus had with a rich ruler. *“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments’”* (NKJV).

The Greek word used here and elsewhere in the New Testament for “good” is *agathos*. It means “beneficial in its effect, being good in its character or constitution.” No human being can make a claim to being wholly good in character. As Romans 3:10-12 states, *“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.’”*

Only God is wholly good – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Concerning Himself, Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep”* (John 10:11). Jesus is good, just as God the Father is good. We see the goodness of God made manifest in the life of Jesus. As Acts 10:38 tells us, *“...Jesus of Nazareth...went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”* On one occasion, after Jesus healed a deaf man, the crowd gave the following response. *“And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf*

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to hear and the mute to speak” (Mark 7:37). **As God in the flesh, Jesus demonstrated the goodness of God in everything He did.** In Jesus, we see the goodness of God in a living person! What does the goodness of God look like, and what does it mean for us?

The Goodness of God Is Merciful

1. *“And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...’”* (Exodus 34:6-7).
2. *“For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!”* (Psalm 117:2).
3. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”* (Ephesians 2:4-5).
4. *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

God, in His goodness, is merciful. Because He is merciful, He has made salvation possible through the blood of His Son, Jesus. This salvation is available to all who are willing to embrace it in obedient faith.

The Goodness of God Provides Help

1. *“Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; Lord, be my helper!”* (Psalm 30:10).
2. *“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).
3. *“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:18; see also Hebrews 4:16).
4. *“So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”* (Hebrews 13:6).

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Jesus demonstrated this characteristic of God as He time and time again responded to cries for help by healing people of their diseases (Matthew 15:25-28; Mark 9:20-27). God has promised to help us in time of need if we are willing to come to Him in faith and are ready to receive what He has to offer.

The Goodness of God Gives Strength

1. *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him”* (Psalm 28:7).
2. *“The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace”* (Psalm 29:11).
3. *“But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble”* (Psalm 37:39).
4. *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13)

God provides strength and guidance to those who recognize their need for Him. Too many people rely on their own strength and their own wisdom as they go through life. They end up failing miserably. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:3, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Heaven is reserved for those who recognize their need for God and are willing to receive His help.

The Goodness of God Offers Hope

1. *“And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You”* (Psalm 39:7).
2. *“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy”* (Psalm 33:18).
3. *“O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption”* (Psalm 130:7).
4. *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believ-*

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ing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”
(Romans 15:13).

5. *“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27).
6. *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy”* (1 Timothy 6:17).

In His goodness, God is a giver – a giver of hope and a giver of all that is good. In fact, every good gift comes from God (James 1:17; Matthew 7:7-11).



Responding to the Goodness of God

How should we respond to the goodness of God? The Bible gives us the following five courses of action.

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1. ***Trust and obey.*** This is where we must begin. God, in His goodness, has made salvation possible for every one of us. The only proper way to respond is in obedient faith. We must believe in God's Son and in His sacrifice for us (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6). We must be willing to confess our faith in Him before men (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:10). We must be willing to repent of our sinful way of life and turn to the Lord (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38). Further, we must be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness (remission) of our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Because God gave His Son to die for our sins, we can have our sins washed away by being united with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:26-27).
2. ***Follow God's Instruction for Daily Living.*** We must seek to do everything we do in a manner to please God and bring glory to His name (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 14:14-16). This means we need to study God's Word daily so that we can understand and obey God's instructions to us (Psalms 1:1-6; 119:11, 97, 105). It means imitating the example of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6), and it means continuing to be faithful to the Lord until death (Revelation 2:10).
3. ***Imitate God's Goodness.*** As Christians, we should seek to do for others what God has done for us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13; 1 John 4:11, 19). We should be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1-2). **When the world looks at Christians, it should be able to see that God is good!**
4. ***Pray for What is Good.*** God wants to bless us. He wants to give us what is good, but we have to be willing to ask for the good things, which are often not the things we may want at the time. In addition, we have to be ready to receive these good things (Matthew 6:9-13; 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13; James 1:5-8; 4:2-3).
5. ***Wait for the Lord.*** If we really believe that God is good, we must learn to trust in His goodness. God will take care of us and provide for our needs as He knows what is best at the time. He knows what is right. We must learn to wait on the Lord. ***“Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on***

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the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14). “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret – it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth” (Psalm 37:7-9).

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31)

Conclusion

God is good! Let us trust in His goodness and follow His good instructions. Let us allow His goodness to mold us and to make us more like Him every day! *“The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:8-9).* †

Samuel Osei Young is a Gospel preacher in Accra, Ghana, West Africa.

Gospel Gazette Online

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Handling Aright the Word

Paul Clements

In rightly dividing the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15), we must remember God has had three distinct plans, methods and dispensations in His dealing with mankind. The first, the Patriarchal Age, lasted from creation to Sinai and for a period of approximately 2,500 years. In this age, God spoke directly to the fathers. After selecting Israel as His chosen people, God gave a law for the Israelites alone. This Mosaic Dispensation, from the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai to the death of Christ, lasted approximately 1,500 years. Many of the things God commanded at the first were incorporated into the Mosaic law. The Jews obeyed these instructions, not because they had been commanded by God in the Patriarchal Age but because God made them a part of the Law of Moses to which they were subject.

Though today we have a new and a better covenant, Jesus included in His New Testament many of the principles found in the Mosaic Law. All believers live in respect of and in obedience to the New Covenant because it is the will of God for man today. Again, we do these things, not because some of these principles were part of the Jewish law, but because they are incorporated into the New Covenant.

At the death of Christ, the Old Law (Mosaic Law) was fulfilled. Jesus took it out of the way to make room for a New Testament (Colossians 2:14). The new covenant had been prophesied (Jeremiah 31:31). When Jesus died, His new and better covenant came into force (Hebrews 9:16-17). It was dedicated by the blood of Christ.

Many of the problems in the world of Christendom result from a failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth. There is an Old Testament and a New Testament. There are further divisions in both the Old and New. Jesus divided the Old Testament in this manner: the law, the prophets and the psalms (Luke 24:44).

The New Testament also has subdivisions. If one wishes to learn of the

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life and teachings of Christ, he must go to the first four books of the New Testament, the books of testimony (John 20:30-31). To learn of the beginning of the church and how people are converted to Christianity, one must go to Acts. It is here that we learn how people render obedience to the Gospel and are translated into the kingdom (Acts 2:47; Colossians 2:13; John 3:3, 5).

The third part of the New Testament is made up of the epistles – letters addressed to the churches telling Christians how to live. The Revelation, prophetic in design and figurative in style, was given for the immediate needs of first century Christians (Revelation 1:1-3).

Every part of God’s Word is important, but we can’t go to a nullified law to prove that instrumental music should be a part of Christian worship. We can’t prove baptism is not essential to salvation by appealing to an event that occurred under the Mosaic Law (Luke 23:39-43). We can’t insist on direct leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians by claiming a promise made specifically to the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13).

May we all follow God’s instruction and respect the authority of His Word. May we all put forth a studied (diligent) effort that we prove ourselves worthy workmen that have nothing of which to be ashamed. ✚

Paul Clements is a former elder, a Gospel preacher, a writer and a hymn composer. He lives in Pike Road, Alabama, USA.



Using guilt by association, the Jewish religious leaders called Jesus *“a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!”* (Luke 7:34 NKJV). Most of their accusations were, of course, false, but no truer words were ever spoken than ‘Jesus Christ is a friend of sinners.’ Thank God He is, else He would never have died for us, and we would still all be sinners.

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Can We See the Bible Alike?

Rodney Nulph

When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he demanded, *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample”* (Philippians 3:15-17). The Holy Spirit, through Paul, expected the saints at Philippi to see the Bible alike! They were to walk *“by the same rule,”* denoting a standard or a pattern. That pattern or standard is God’s Word. Sadly, many today see the Bible in different ways. Some interpret it one way and others another way. However, the Bible does not mean different things to each reader. If it meant different things to different people, there would be no way we could *“walk by the same rule,”* for we would all have different rules – different standards. Nevertheless, that is exactly what is happening in our world and sadly, in some cases, even in the church. The question “Can we see the Bible alike?” begs an answer.

The Facts

The very Book we are discussing affirms that we **can** see the Bible alike. In fact, to say that the Bible means different things to different people is to completely misunderstand its contents. Moses affirmed that we can all see the Bible alike when he penned, *“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deuteronomy 29:29). David declared that the Bible can be seen by all alike when he wrote, *“Through thy precepts I get understanding...”* (Psalm 119:104). Notice carefully David did not say that God’s precepts create confusion and dismay but rather understanding! The apostle of love was clear about our understanding the Bible alike as he scribed, *“And*

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*many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: **But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name***” (John 20:30-31). Paul was clear about the universal interpretation of Scripture when he wrote, “*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:4).

The Fog

The Bible is obviously quite clear in affirming that we can all see its contents alike, but many fail to see the Bible alike. Why is that? While I am certain there are other reasons than what we will notice in this article, following are a few of the **fogs** that cause people to see the Bible differently.

- **People** can cause us to see the Bible differently. Sometimes people in our **clan** or family will persuade us to not understand the Bible properly. Some insist on believing things religiously because of what their mothers or grandmothers believed. “If it was good enough for grandpa to believe, it is good enough for me to believe as well.” How sad (Matthew 10:34-37; 19:29)! Sometimes people in **crowds** cause a fog that prevents us from seeing the Bible alike. However, we must remember that the majority is often **not** right religiously (Matthew 7:13-21).
- **Pride** can cause us to not see the Bible alike. It takes humility to admit we do not know certain things. Sadly, some are so proud that they will never admit they do not know something or may have practiced something wrong religiously. **Truth seekers, not self-seekers, find truth** (Matthew 5:3; 6).
- **Phony doctrine** is another cause for not seeing the Bible alike (Matthew 13:14-15; 1 John 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11). The **persuader**, Satan himself, is another fog that causes people to see the Bible differently. Paul confirmed that “the

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god of this world” can and will blind people’s eyes to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

The Fortune

Truth can be known and understood (John 8:32). When we clear the fog from our eyes, the fact remains that the Bible is meant to be read, studied, understood and obeyed. When we see truth for what it really is, we have found a real fortune! We have the fortune of a **standard**. We can know what is right and what is wrong. We know how to conduct ourselves in **every** daily situation when we know truth. We have found the fortune of **sturdiness**. We are no longer carried about by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). We have an anchor to hold us in times of distress (Hebrews 6:19-20). We have found the fortune of the **Savior**. To find and understand truth is to find Jesus the Lord! In fact, without God’s Word, we can never really know Jesus (John 5:39).

Can we all see the Bible alike? **Absolutely!** We can and must “*walk by the same rule*”! Religiously, may we only speak those things that are sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). Peter’s command is so fitting. “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...*” (1 Peter 4:11). If we would just do that, we all could see the Bible alike! †

Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher and the Associate Editor of Gospel Gazette Online magazine.



KENNEY’S PENNIES

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12 NKJV). The concept of salvation by grace is true, but it becomes false when someone adds the word “alone” or “only.” We are saved by grace but not saved by grace alone. The serpent did the same thing to Eve by adding one little word, “*not,*” as in “*You shall not surely die.*” Words matter!



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

How God Recognizes the Stranger

Paula Bates

1. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and _____ the stranger, giving him food and _____. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of _____. Deuteronomy 10:18-19
2. And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not _____ him. The stranger who _____ among you shall be to you as one _____ among you, and you shall love him as yourself: for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33-34
3. One _____ shall be for the native born and the stranger who dwells among you. Exodus 12:49
4. I was a _____ and you did not take ME in, naked and you did not cloth ME, _____ and in prison, and did not visit ME. Matthew 25:43
5. [Widows] well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has _____ strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the _____, if she has diligently followed every good work. I Timothy 5:10
6. Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to _____ strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained _____. Hebrews 13:1-2



- Answers:**
1. Loves, clothing, Egypt
 2. Mistreat, dwells, born
 3. Law
 4. Stranger, sick
 5. Lodged, afflicted
 6. Entertain, angels

There Are Not Many Ways to Heaven

Sunny David

Most people believe that as long as one is sincere and honest about his religious beliefs that it does not matter what one does religiously and that all religious people will finally enter Heaven. In essence, all humanity is trying to worship and



please the same God Who is the Creator of all things, including man. All humanity has sinned against God. Yet, the world is very much divided religiously. There are many faiths and many different beliefs about origins. In almost every religion on earth there are many honest and sincere people who are trying their best to please God and thus hope that He will open the door of Heaven for them when they leave their earthly existence.


However, the fact is that being sincere and honest does not always and necessarily mean that one is right. One may sincerely drink or swallow poison from a wrongly labeled bottle of medicine, honestly believing it to be the right medicine, and die. Poison will not save one, no matter how sincerely it is taken. The Bible says, ***“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”*** (Proverbs 16:25). Through the account of the wise and the foolish builder, Christ taught a very powerful

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lesson on this subject that we all need to heed. He said:

*Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father in Heaven**. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. Therefore, **whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house: and it fell. And great was its fall.** (Matthew 7:21-27)*

In this narrative, Christ taught that many on earth are living with false hope, thinking and believing that whatever they are doing in His name will be acceptable. However, it is not going to be true on the Day of Judgment when many will discover that they were on a wrong way (Matthew 7:13-14).

God has appointed Jesus Christ as the one Mediator between God and man through whom every individual can be reconciled to God (1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21). Based on what He has done for the salvation of man from sin (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10), He declared, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:6). Through Jesus, we learn what we should do to be saved (Mark 16:16). He taught the way we all must worship God acceptably (John 4:24). He should be our example in life (1 Peter 2:21). If we want God to receive us in Heaven, we must hear what He taught and do what He said. Only by doing that can we make sure that we are on the way that is right and which will lead us to Heaven. 

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

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Because You May Live

Cecil May, Jr.

Because of the uncertainty of life, people are frequently exhorted to be baptized “because you may die.” Death can come at any time, to the old or to the young. We must be ready when death comes.

On the other hand, the Christian life is an “*abundant life*” (John 10:10). The fellowship of fellow Christians – brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers in the Lord, people who will help you when you need them – is ours in Christ (Mark 10:29-30).

Real joy is found in loving your neighbor – in feeding the hungry, visit-



ing the lonely, mowing the lawn of the infirm, helping others anonymously, being good even to our enemies – as Jesus commanded. Even if there were no Heaven, the Christian life is still the best life to live. †

So, become a Christian or be more faithful because you may live!

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

[Editor's Note: Allurements to be baptized because the baptistry water is warm or because this is a convenient time, etc. are not valid reasons for being baptized. Rather, conviction ought to be the factor that leads to conversion. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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THE ONLY APPROACH TO GOD

Justin Guin

Recently, one mantra that became quite popular was, “I am living my own truth.” It contends each person lives by his or her own standards of truth for his or her life. One celebrity tried to use it to escape criminal charges by declaring she was not guilty because according to her truth she did what was right. This is one example that demonstrates the pluralistic nature of our culture – embracing multiple or alternate competing views simultaneously.

This principle is especially evident in religious matters. Many assert that God is whomever or whatever one desires him to be. There is no objective instruction to guide people in their pursuit of faith. Of course, this is an issue because the Bible makes many claims to be the only objective truth that leads to faith and to a relationship with God (Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Psalm 119:105). Consider one of the most well-known passages in John’s Gospel account. “*Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’*” (John 14:6). This passage is exclusive and runs perpendicular to our world’s pluralistic worldview. Anyone approaching God must do so through Jesus Christ.

We must approach God through Jesus because He is the way to God. In Jesus’ approximately 33-year earthly life, He showed the world how God desires each of us to live. Thus, a disciple must live as Jesus did and submit to His commandments (1 Peter 2:25; 1 John 2:5-6). In addition, Jesus’ death and resurrection provided a new covenant that gave the entire world access to God without the Law of Moses (1 John 2:1). We can now behold God with “*unveiled face*” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

All must approach God through Jesus because He is the Truth. Jesus is the embodiment of Truth. John stated that Christ was full of “*grace and truth*” (John 1:14, 18). He made God known to us in human terms, and His Word must govern our lives (John 14:21).

Everyone must approach God through Jesus because He is the life. Jesus is the originator of life (John 1:4). Jesus’ life provided eternal life for

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all of humanity (John 3:16). He paid sin's death penalty, and everyone now can have the free gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

In matters of faith, we're expected to follow God's objective Truth. There is only one way to approach God the Father. It is through Jesus Christ. †

[Editor's Note: Indeed, the free gift of eternal salvation, as a result of Christ's vicarious death on Calvary's cross, is available to all of humanity. However, only those who obey Jesus Christ (Hebrews 5:9), that is, those who demonstrate an obedient faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26), satisfy the divine stipulations to receive that free gift. All who do not obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17) or who do not remain faithful (1 Peter 2:20-22; Revelation 2:10) will be lost. Many souls will perish (Matthew 7:13-14), but happily an innumerable and vast contingent of mankind will enjoy eternal life (Revelation 7:9-10). Jesus spelled out what constitutes initial obedience or how to become a child of God (Mark 16:16), and the apostle Peter preached the same message on the birthday of the Lord's church (Acts 2:38). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



Robison's Rubies

Believe in God because of natural law. Who would expect that the systematic inner workings of a car or a computer could just arrange themselves by chance? They need creation and constant maintenance. Why would anyone surmise that a marvelous universe with predictable patterns just organized itself by chance? Paul once said that God *“did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons...”* (Acts 14:17). To the great philosophers of ancient Athens, Paul declared that God *“gives to all life, breath, and all things”* (Acts 17:25). It is more reasonable to admit that these things came about by design rather than by chance, and design necessarily demands there be a Designer. If not, why not? †

Andy Robison is the minister for the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ and the Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA. He also maintains a website of church hymns at <https://www.churchofchristsongs.com/>.

Verse Search



2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-23

Jerry Bates

1. How did Paul say he conducted himself while in their presence? (1:12)
2. What was Paul's meaning in 1:13 when he said that he was not writing anything other than what they read?
3. Where was Paul going when he had intended to come by and see them again? (1:16)
4. What did Paul mean when he said that his plans were not "Yes and No"? (1:18)
5. Who else had preached the Gospel to the Corinthians besides Paul? (1:19)
6. What are the promises of God? (1:20)
7. Who did Paul say had anointed him? (1:21)
8. Who is the guarantee that we have to show that we can depend upon the promises of God? (1:22)
9. Who did Paul call as a witness to the truthfulness of what he wrote? (1:23)
10. Why did Paul say he did not come to Corinth again? (1:23)
11. What did Paul say he was with the Corinthians? (1:24)
12. Paul said he had determined not to come to them again in _____.
(2:1)

(See the inside back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. **13** For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end **14** (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

15 And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit, **16** to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. **17** Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? **18** But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. **19** For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. **20** For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. **21** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, **22** who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

23 Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. **24** Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

1 But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. **2** For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?

NOTE: Paul's critics had accused him of being insincere in his letters, of writing one thing and doing another. In this section, Paul was denying those charges and declaring that there were no hidden agendas in his letters. Paul had intended to visit Corinth, but he did not come in order to spare them and give them the opportunity to correct their problems themselves (1:23). Thus, it was His love and concern for the church that caused him to change his plans rather than any fickleness on his part. He said that his preaching reflected the truthfulness and faithfulness of God, and all the promises of God are true and trustworthy. Many scholars think that Paul had already made one visit to Corinth after his first epistle, and he wanted to avoid a second painful visit, but the text does not necessarily say that; therefore, we cannot be certain.

Paul also said that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Sealing indicates ownership and security. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment, promising us that we belong to God and that there are more spiritual blessings to come.

The Right Foundation

Chuck Taylor


The foundation is ever so important when constructing a building. Concrete reinforced with rebar is the usual construction method. There are building codes and constant inspections to ensure regulations are met. Builders are held accountable for any errors in the foundational support. Constructing a building without these codes could cause the building to collapse.

According to God, it also makes a difference where we build our spiritual foundation. Christ gave the example of one who built his house on sand. Many heard the sayings of Christ but did not do them. When the winds came and the rain descended on the house, it fell because it was not founded upon rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Here, the rock for us is the Word of God. All of the church's activity must be founded in the rock of the Word of God.

In another sense, Paul told the Corinthians that *“no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Many churches claim attachment to Christ, but unless they have submitted to His will, they are not His church. Therefore, Jesus Christ is not their foundation.

Notice Matthew 16:15-16, which reads, *“He [Jesus] said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’”* (NKJV). In verse 18 Jesus said, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*

Jesus built His church on the fact that He is the Christ. He is the Foundation and the Head (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18)! Any organization that builds on some other foundation or has a different head is not the church of the Bible. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Lord's church. Any institution founded by man cannot stand against Satan. Only the church of our Lord will, in the end, stand.

It is grand that our foundation is the Christ our Lord! We recognize that He is the only One Who built the sure foundation – He is the foundation! Therefore, when we build with His will – the Word of God – we build upon the Rock or Foundation, Who is Christ. Examine your foundation and determine whether it is from man or from God. If from man, then discard it. If from God, then forever cling to it. Think about it! 

Chuck Taylor is a deacon for the Rapid City Church of Christ in Rapid City, South Dakota, USA.

THE CHURCH

Elders Must Know

Mark T. Tonkery

There are some things that an elder must know about himself, as well as knowing what the Bible teaches so he can be an effective elder. The Bible tells us the following things that an elder must know.


An elder must know himself. First Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5:1-5 all teach that an elder must know himself. He must know how he relates to his wife, to his children and to the people in his community, as well as to Christians in the congregation where he serves. An elder must show he is able to manage his life well by being mature in the faith (Hebrews 5:12-14). A man who is considered qualified for the position of elder needs to have spent time with his wife and family, and he continues to do so. Elders are men who lead their families in Christ and have managed them well; this is the main training ground for a man to be an elder. If a man cannot lead his family to Christ or manage them well, how can he expect to lead the lost to the Lord or to manage the local church?

An elder must know the congregation in such a way that the elders move it forward and closer to God. As has already been stated, the family is the training ground for one to be an elder. By learning to build good relationships in his home, he will be able to build relationships with the people in the congregation. This will help the eldership to better lead the church. As relationships are being built within the congregation, the elders can know the **pulse** of the local church so they can better meet its needs. This will help the elders to know how to move the congregation forward spiritually and to help them to set goals for maturity in Christ. The elders need to help the congregation to stay focused on the goal of Heaven and to help others get there as well (Philippians 3:12). This is the idea of being a shepherd, knowing the members and helping them get to Heaven (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:17-30).

An elder must know how to be a servant. Jesus said anyone who wants to lead must be a servant (Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:14-15). A servant

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is a person who has the go first attitude, as Jesus modeled in His life. By this, a leader needs to do the jobs that no one else is willing to do and to teach others how to do them (Ephesians 4:11-16). Elders need to also encourage others to be servants and to be faithful to the cause of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:11). The Bible tells us that elders are helped by deacons who assist with many aspects of serving the congregation. Elders also need to set the example for others to follow in word and in deed (Colossians 3:17). By being a servant, an elder shows the congregation what it must do as well in the service of Christ.

Elders must know how to rest. Jesus also showed that as a leader one needs to take time to rest and pray (Mark 1:35; 6:31, 46). Elders must know themselves to the point that they know how much stress they can handle and realize the time to stop and to rest. Elders who serve best take time to read their Bibles, focus on spiritual matters in prayer and take time to relax – doing things that are enjoyable. Too many godly elders have failed the church and themselves because they did not know themselves well enough to stop and rest. 

[Editor's Note: Elders (as well as all other Christians) face many challenges, including introspection and ongoing personal development (1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 13:5). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Mark T. Tonkery is a Gospel preacher for the churches of Christ in the USA.

Kenney's Pennies

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2 NKJV). *“No condemnation”* does not mean Christians are perfect, just perfected by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Notice the statement is conditional. Have you met those conditions (i.e., are you “in Christ Jesus”)?”



Is One Item of Worship More Important than Another?

Martha Lynn Rushmore

My question is, in the five items of worship that are taught in the New Testament, which is the most important? These acts of worship are commanded to be done during the worship service on Sunday, the first day of the week. We are to sing, pray, preach or teach, observe communion and give of our means or money. Singing, praying, teaching or preaching and giving can also be done at other times as well; one can read of these acts of worship occurring on days in addition to the first day of the week. However, the Lord's Supper is authorized in the New Testament for observance only on the first day of the week.

Let me explain why I say giving can be done other times, too. If a person needs help on Monday, do you tell him or her to wait until Sunday because that is the only day of the week I am allowed to give? Of course not! This is silly. When Christ taught in Matthew 25:32-46 about dividing the sheep from the goats, He used the example of the needy that those on the right hand or the sheep helped. Nothing in this parable says anything about the first day of the week. We are commanded to give on Sunday by collection in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, but that is not the only day we can give to the Lord. We are told to give cheerfully as we have been prospered in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

[Giving that occurred in Acts 4:32-5:10 does not appear to have occurred during worship on the first day of the week. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Colossians 3:16 instructs us to teach and to admonish one another by singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. We are also to have thankfulness in our hearts to God. We are told to speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in Ephesians 5:19. There is nothing in any verse in the New Testament that says anything about singing beautifully, but we are told to sing and to teach others.

The Scripture does not anywhere teach or authorize playing an

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instrument in Christian worship. We are told to ***“sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord”*** (Ephesians 5:19). If we were instructed to play an instrument, then all would have to play, not just one or a few playing instruments. This verse says all are to sing.


Another item of worship is prayer. We are to pray through Jesus to God the Father. Jesus is our Mediator between us and our Heavenly Father (1 Timothy 2:5). Our prayers are to be fervent or sincere to God (James 5:16). Note Philippians 4:6-7, which reads, ***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God: and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”***

God commanded preaching. On one occasion, Paul preached until midnight, ready to depart on the morrow (Acts 20:7). In 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Paul told Timothy to preach the Word. He was to preach the truth even if the people did not like what the Scriptures said. He was not to tickle the ears of those who listened. Preachers, today, are also commanded to preach the whole Truth, even if others do not agree with what the Word of God says.



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Acts 20:7 says Paul stayed with brethren about a week so they could commune together in Christian worship. What do we eat and drink during the communion? The apostle Paul cited 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 about when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper with His apostles prior to His crucifixion. He prayed and broke unleavened bread. Then, He told those present, ***"This is my body which is broken for you."*** Secondly, in the same manner, they were given the fruit of the vine, of which Christ told them, ***"This is the cup of the new covenant in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death til He comes."*** We are also to examine ourselves and to take the bread and the cup worthily. Worthily (an adverb, referring to the manner) does not mean worthy (an adjective, referring to the quality of something). They are two different words.

Sing, pray, preach or teach, commune and give are all commanded in the New Testament for our worship to God. Do we read anywhere that one activity of worship to God is more important than another? Each item of worship is just as important as another. We are told in John 4:24 that God is a spirit, and we must worship in spirit and in truth. 

[Editor's Note: Doubtlessly, Catholic influence has indirectly led some members of the Lord's church to presume that the Lord's Supper is more important than other acts of worship, but the Scriptures do not teach such. Perhaps other Christians revere the vicarious, sacrificial death of Jesus Christ to the extent that they elevate Communion in their own minds. All acts of Christian worship, though, ought to be embraced fully, worshipping in spirit (emotional devotion) and truth (according to the Scriptures). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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 Ocala, Florida, USA.

Quote Worthy

“The issue of women’s role in Christian service is often viewed more with emotion than regard to what the Bible actually says”
(Mary Wilhelm, “Worthy Women,” page 70).

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The Correct Attitude for Public Worship

George McNulty



When worshipping the Almighty Creator of the universe, we would do well to follow the examples of the saints in the Holy Bible. God has made it very clear in His Word that He requires specific acts of worship towards Him. These divinely ordained precepts must be adhered to, or we will be guilty of offering Him vain or profane worship that is unworthy of His station.

God is holy, and as such, He must be approached with the utmost reverence. Failure to do so is a serious matter, as we can see many times in Scripture. Nadab and Abihu were consumed with fire for their disobedience, and Cain was rejected for not doing what God commanded. Upon King Josiah's discovery of the Law (2 Chronicles 32), he was so upset at the people's failure of correct worship of God that he led the nation in repentance and did not rest until all was done according to God's will! These examples should spur us to offer our utmost in service to God.

So, let us ask ourselves. "What is our attitude in our worship to our Heavenly Father?" "Are we failing Him on any level?" "How can we improve our worship to show God the honor He is due?" First, we are

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told in John 4:24 that *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* Elsewhere, we are also told how to worship Him. *“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness”* (Psalm 29:2).

How does our attitude affect reverence toward God? If we are flippant in our service to Him, it means that He is somehow less worthy of respect than mere men who may hold political or royal office. Does He not deserve more honor than they deserve? In Psalm 95:6, we read of the standard God expects from us. *“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”* We see in Scripture the telling action that kneeling proclaims. For example, consider when John knelt before the angel, who rejected the honor, and then, consider Thomas, who knelt before the Lord Jesus, who received the honor due Him. Do we understand that to kneel to God is an act of adoration and blessing? Therefore, when we adore Him, we kneel, at least figuratively. **Of a truth, it is no small thing to worship God, and worship is nothing to be taken lightly.**

Knowing this, how should we conduct ourselves during worship? Wise King Solomon wrote that the faithful should *“keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil”* (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:15, *“Know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”* We must remember during public worship that others are there to honor God, too. Others see how we act, and that informs them of our devotion to God and each other. By arriving early for worship, we show the priority that services have in our lives, and by bringing a reverent attitude, we show others the love we have for the Lord in our attendance. **During worship, we must resolve to fix our minds totally on honoring God.** Everyone has an active role in worship, such as hearing, singing, praying, partaking of the Lord’s Supper and encouraging others by our loyal attendance. Hebrews 10:25 and Psalm 100 tell us to come together in joyful union and to seek to praise Him with thanksgiving. Worshipers must demonstrate correct and reverent attitudes in every way.

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Remember that Christ's presence is not limited to only large congregations. He said in Matthew 18:20, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

[Though the specific application was to the small band of apostles, in principle, one can extrapolate its application to even groups of disciples in any century. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Some have asked if God takes notice of our worship. If the worship is done according to His ordinances, then He most certainly does notice our worship approvingly! We read in Malachi 3:16-17, *"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."*

[As already noted, God also notices and disdains faulty worship. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Let us think about biblical things and consider how we may show God and others how important He is to us. We show it in our attitude, our reverence, our love for one another and our respect for Him. **Public worship is no casual act. It is a special occasion** and should always be regarded as such. Let the world see our devotion in our manner and dress, in our practical care, and in our desire for others' souls. Above all, let us be pleasers of God, holding His Word as the only authority in all our ways. **Never let us share the fate of those who disrespected God by offering what they wanted, rather than what God required.** †

George McNulty preaches for the College Avenue Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.



Did You Know?

The initial audience for the Book of Mark was the Romans. The initial audience for the Book of Luke was the Hellenists (Greeks). The initial audience for the Book of John was the Greek World.

The



We Set

Robert Johnson

“...Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Influence is something we exert all the time, whether we realize it or not. The words we speak and the lives we live reflect who we are and our value system in action on display for others to observe. Depending on your relationship with others, the example your influence shows may be imitated by others, such as friends or family. Especially young children are very impressionable and open to input in shaping their morals and ideals. This is perhaps realized no better than when we reach adulthood and say something that was repeated to us many times by our parents, and remark, “I’ve become my mother (or father)!”


Certainly not every behavior is attributable to the influence of someone’s example, as each person is a unique individual and will grow up to make his or her own choices about how to live life. However, one’s example, whether for good or bad, can and often does factor into the process of shaping the lives of others. I remember a police officer relating a story to me, having taken a juvenile home for breaking and entering, only to have the child’s parent lecture the officer and then tell the child he didn’t have to do anything the officer said. Should we wonder where that child had learned criminal behavior was acceptable?

The same principle applies spiritually as well. Statistics indicate that

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children whose parents attend all services faithfully and who are involved in the work of the church are more likely to be faithful themselves. Conversely, those parents who attend only once in a while and are not involved in the work of the church will find their children less motivated to be faithful in their own lives as adults. How many stories could be related of uninvolved parents, or parents who allowed physical pursuits to always take precedent over the spiritual, where their children drifted away and have no interest in the church as adults? Certainly, even parents who do their best to live faithful lives and so instruct their children to do the same will be challenged by the influence of the world in which we live. Yet, what are the percentages for these young people when their parents and other influential examples in their lives are not faithful to the assembly, to the work of the church and to Christian living in the home?

How easy it is to shake one's head at the way things are but refuse to look at one's own influence and example. If you show no respect, you shouldn't be surprised when those around are disrespectful. If you show no love, don't be surprised when others are unloving. If you reject the authority of others, don't be dumbfounded when others reject your authority regarding them. If you aren't an obedient child of God, don't blame others until you have first looked at yourself. **Most psychologists affirm it is difficult for children to rise above their parents**, as the power of their example works to help shape their lives.

As a young man, Timothy, in the above Scripture, was encouraged by Paul to set a proper example to others, as well he should have. How about those who are older in the faith? Paul urged Titus to remind older men and women to be positive in their relations with others (Titus 2:2-3). We cannot imbibe the spirit of the world and expect those who see us to learn anything different. **While words of encouragement are important, lives of encouragement are just as important.** John reminds us, *“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:18). What is the heritage our lives will leave for those following us? Just what kind of example do **you** set? 

Robert Johnson preaches for the Lord's church in Longview, Texas, USA.

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The Prodigal Son

Jenny Choate

Over the last couple of months, I have been conversing with one of the sweetest Christian ladies I have ever met, and we were talking about her adult sons and their faith. Both of her sons have struggled with their faith. I have been searching for some wise words of God to share from the heart of a young, foolish woman to the heart of an older and wiser woman.

One day, we were texting about nothing in particular, and she mentioned how much she still loves to spoil her “boys,” even though they are grown men. I thought back to some of our previous conversations and thought about how this is a recurring theme. She loves to do things to show her sons how much she loves them. Then, it occurred to me that her actions, while they were intended to show love, were probably one reason why her sons have struggled with their faith.

It reminded me of a similar situation in my family. Despite being raised in the church, this young man rebelled. He was frequently found to be drinking, smoking, using profanity, having sexual relations and doing drugs. While not all these events were known at the time, they were all present. This young man had more than one run-in with the law over these behaviors. However, the loving family was always there for him. They were willing to bail him out. They paid for a good lawyer. They did every enabling thing short of buying the drugs, tobacco and booze. This young man walked completely away from the church, and he is unlikely to ever return.

As I thought about the similar circumstances, I tried to find Scripture to take to this wonderful woman. I constantly came back to the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. At first, I struggled to make the connection. I knew from my family experience that the young man needed to be kicked out for his sinful life, but in the parable, the father did not evict his son for sinning.

In Luke 15:12, the younger son went to his father and asked for his portion of the inheritance early. Then, he went to a far-off country. There, this son lived a very sinful life. After some time and when all his money

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was gone, he was forced to find the lowest of low jobs (v. 15).

Note where the son went when he wanted to live a sinful life. He did not remain in his father's home or even in close proximity. He went far away to live his sinful life. Why did he go so far away? The prodigal son knew that his sin would not be welcome in his father's house, and that if he wanted to sin, he had to be far from the reach of his father. Being a member of this rich man's house, whether child or servant, meant stability and protection. It meant food and shelter. It meant that the father would share his blessings with his household. However, the father was not willing to share these blessings with a sinful child, and the son knew it.



Was the father harsh, cruel and unforgiving? Is that what drove the son away? No! Verses 20-24 show the father was waiting for the son to come home. He had been longing for the prodigal's return, and the father ran out to meet him. The father was quick to forgive his son as soon as he confessed his sins. The father was neither cruel nor unkind. He did not berate his son or make him grovel while asking for forgiveness.

The father was kind and loving but also firm. He would not tolerate sin in his home. He could not allow one person to disrupt the environment

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he cultivated for his family. He had absolute control. Likewise, if he were to allow one child to blatantly sin, how easy would it be for the others to be disrespectful? How would the householder keep his servants in order if he could not even keep his children in order? Open sin of one will quickly spiral to others.

Since the father in the parable is clearly a parallel to God the Father, what does that say to us? We see passages that tell us how we sin when we fail to do what we know is right (James 4:17). We are also told that there is no forgiveness for those who go on sinning willfully (Romans 6; Hebrews 10:26). Sin separates from God (Romans 6:23). These verses let us know that if we want to live sinful lives, we can be sure that we will not receive God's blessings. More importantly, we will not receive a crown of life and a home in Heaven if we persist in sin.


How does this relate to our parenting? We cannot show support for our children when they engage in sinful living. We cannot offer them any of the blessings God has given to us. He blesses us with our homes, our food, our vehicles, etc. If the father in the parable – and God by extension – would not allow the prodigal son in the parable to remain in his blessings while he sinned, why do we? Why do we allow our children to live in our homes, eat our food, drive our vehicles and spend our money while they persist in sin? Why do we shower them with blessings as a reward for sinful behavior? This is not the example God shows us in Luke 15, but it is how we live our lives. We wonder why our children will not come back to God when they walk away. We wonder why we cannot get them to stop living in sin. The real question is, why should they? They have every blessing God is giving you, and you are willing to share those blessings with them. They see no reason to change. We are literally “loving” them straight into Hell.

The father knew what the son hoped to accomplish by asking for his inheritance, but he gave it to him. Why? The son had to choose to do the right thing. The father could not save him from his choices. Also note how the father did not go out and search for this lost son. Why? The son needed to realize on his own that he needed to come home and ask for forgiveness. He had been taught what was expected. God is willing to forgive, but we

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must be willing to seek God. If we do, God will “run” to us with open arms.

When our children decide they do not want to obey or to respect God in our homes, we need to be prepared to send them out. They must face the consequences of falling away if they are ever going to return to God. When babies learn to walk, we allow them to fall. Why? Because it teaches them to get back up! This is how they develop strong legs. If we only allowed our children to use a walker, they would never fall, but they would never grow stronger either. They would never learn that it is okay to fall but not okay to stay down. However, this is exactly what we do to our children when we allow them to disobey God in our homes.

Parents, we must learn that the house is our house, and the rules are our rules. It does not matter how old your child is, you cannot allow him or her to break God’s rules in your house and then bless them for doing so! Do your adult children live with you and refuse to come to worship, use profanity or tobacco in your house or take the Lord’s name in vain? These actions must be stopped, or they need to be out of your house with which God has blessed you. If they want to live with their significant other, use drugs, party or in some other way slander the name of the Lord and the bride of Christ, you need to stop opening your door to them. The father did not visit the son in his sinful life and wish him well. Instead, the father waited for him to come home. 

Jenny Choate lives in Imboden, Arkansas, USA.

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Purity Of Heart

Eddie Cooper

Our Lord taught that we are to be pure of heart. *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8). Paul said to Titus, *“To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled”* (1:15).

The New Testament words translated *“pure”* mean, “uncontaminated, free of foreign matter or defilement.” Spiritually, the word means “free from foulness, guilt, corrupt desire, criminal or irregular passions.”

The Old Testament uses a similar word, translated *“virtuous,”* four times. Boaz called Ruth virtuous, and in Proverbs, Solomon used the word to refer to godly wives. Today, we might use the words “real” or “genuine.”

Contrary to today’s philosophy, **the pure mind chooses what God chooses.** Vocation, place of residence, recreation, language – all reflect the desire to have the mind of Christ. With a pure heart, I see my relationship with God as comforting, positive and joyful. I aspire to do His will – to be like Him. If I have real love and mercy for others, it comes from God and my love for Him.

Contrary to today’s philosophy, **the pure mind chooses what God chooses.** Vocation, place of residence, recreation, language – all reflect the desire to have the mind of Christ. With a pure heart, I see my relationship with God as comforting, positive and joyful. I aspire to do His will – to be like Him.

Purity of heart means mastery of self, not naïve innocence or perfection. Real purity is hardy, resilient and lasting. Innocence is easily deluded and

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vanishes when disillusionment comes. Perfection is impossible, and not understanding this fact can lead to disillusion. The perfection God wants is growth toward the ideal, but He loves us while we are trying. We do not have to be perfect to have His love.

Purity of heart does not act a role, but it lives honestly, daily making progress toward complete love of the Father and of others. It lives in the world but does not concentrate on the world. Purity of heart allows God's will to shape one's life, satisfied that, although humans are not perfect, His ways are perfect. Because of that security, we face life calmly, unafraid and confident.

A pure heart does not have a condemning spirit, but neither does it ignore evil or indulge in blind pictures of humanity. Purity of heart is realistic, always loving but also discerning. Purity of heart doesn't just believe truth; it **does** truth. ***"But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God"*** (John 3:21).

What a joy to have someone recognize my child because of his resemblance to me or my wife. Just so should others see God in us! ✝

Eddie Cooper is a Gospel preacher who resides in South Charleston, West Virginia, USA.

Robison's Rubies

Jesus once said, ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"*** (Matthew 5:8).

There are people who are hypocrites, for they look religious on the outside but are really impure in heart. That does for them, the cause

of Christ and everybody around them a horrible disservice. Those who are really blessed are those who keep their hearts pure. Jesus taught that it was out of the heart that all kinds of evil proceeded (Matthew 15:16-20). Proverbs 4:23, therefore, admonishes, ***"Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life."*** The biblical heart is the mind. How are you taking care of your heart? How are you feeding your mind? With things that corrupt or with the teachings of God that build up? Is your heart pure?



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Gary C. Hampton

Quite a few people use the greeting, “What’s new?” It is their way of opening the door to any conversation an individual might want to have. It is also a good question for God’s people to ask.

God has made and will make things new for us. He sent Jesus to be the Mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 12:24). This covenant enables God’s children to come before His throne (Hebrews 10:19-20). We become a part of that new covenant when we are made new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Christians look forward to new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13). In that realm, the faithful will be with God and will be designated as His people. The Father will wipe away our tears. Death, sorrow, crying and pain will be no more (Revelation 21:1-5).

God’s people should make sure they are made new for God. Paul wrote, *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation”* (Galatians 6:15). We cannot allow the world to fit us into its mold, but we must renew our minds daily (Romans 12:1-2). The physical man will continue his path toward death. The spiritual man should be renewed daily (2 Corinthians 4:16).

What’s new? It is everything God has prepared and will prepare for His people. **We must be sure to be a people who emphasize being made new for God.** 

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



DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING


Proclaiming Christ in Times of Trouble

Adam Cozort

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice. (Philippians 1:12-18)

During Paul's imprisonment, there were many things that he could have spent his time considering. He could have worried about his situation, grown depressed over why these things were happening to him or grown angry at the unfairness of being imprisoned simply because he proclaimed the Truth. Instead of any of these things, he rejoiced because, through his imprisonment, the Gospel of Christ was being proclaimed in every corner of Rome.

The brethren were bolder in proclaiming the Word. Even those who did not accept the truth of Christ and were only speaking with ill will were talking about it. Either way, Christ was being proclaimed.

We need to remember that the times when it seems we are going through the most adversity are when our proclamations of the Gospel have the greatest effect. **The world watches the measure of our faith far more in times of trouble than when all is well.** Therefore, we should be like Paul and rejoice – even in times of trouble – so that the opportunity is present to bring glory to our Savior in His service. 

Aaron Cozort preaches for the Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

When Our Faith Is Challenged

Clarence Lavender

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). We find our faith challenged on a number of occasions as we go through life. Such is certainly the case in the process of growing up. Some become so unsettled by the problems that are raised that they begin to have doubts as to the correctness of their faith in Christ. During these difficult times of uncertainty and perplexity, we may wonder what we can do, and this is especially a concern for young people.

First, do not for a moment think that you are the first person who faced doubt. Such has happened in the lives of countless believers, but their faithfulness to God shows us that attacks do not have to destroy one’s faith (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Second, do not think because you have doubts that you are a wicked person. It is often the case that some doubts originate in the lower levels of moral living, but there are many perplexities that do not originate there. This prayer will help: *“Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief”* (Mark 9:24).

Third, do not think that your case is hopeless and that you will never settle your doubt. Be patient and give yourself some time to study the problem.

Fourth, do not throw overboard all you believe just because at the present time you are unsettled on this point or that point. Don’t give up. Hang in there, and things will work themselves out. Remember that God’s providential help is always present (Hebrews 4:11).

Fifth, do not fail to live by the highest principles that you believe. Act on that in which you have confidence. If a person will not live by the truth he sees, what good will additional truth do for him? He is not as serious as he ought to be concerning truth and righteousness (Hebrews 2:4).

Sixth, deal with it diligently. It may take study to solve the problem or to understand it, as is true in some cases, but the problem does not need to disturb faith even though that particular problem may never be solved (2 Timothy 2:15).

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Seventh, regardless of the problem, it should be dealt with prayerfully. Prayer is not a substitute for study, and study is not a substitute for prayer (Luke 17:5).



Eighth, seek help from other sources – persons and books – as we have opportunity. It may be that a friend or a neighbor has just solved that problem. Do some study in the field of Christian evidences, for otherwise, we may let one problem outweigh a thousand solutions. Recognize that a thing can be proved even if we cannot answer all questions concerning the matter. Remember that somewhere there is someone who has the answer for which we are looking (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Ninth, have confidence in the Bible. At all times, the Bible has been found to be true and its critics false! Such will give a person confidence so that the next problem can be dealt with satisfactorily. Thus, a child of God does not become unsettled every time a new challenge is raised. Have the attitude, “God said it – that settles it” (Hebrews 11:6).

Remember **as we go through life that our faith will be challenged on occasions. During these times of uncertainty and perplexity, be patient, work, pray, study and seek counsel from good sources.** †

Clarence Lavender has been a longtime Gospel preacher and resides in Virginia, USA.

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Service with a Smile

Ralph Clevinger

As Christians, we are the servants of the Most High God. What an honor! The service we render ought to flow out of appreciation. Jesus' sacrifice and our obedience to the Gospel bridges the great divide between our once lost state and our heavenly home. We do not have one ounce of hope without the blood of Christ. Once we commit one sin, we become morally bankrupt. Jesus put it this way. *“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin”* (John 8:34 NKJV). The longer we engage in sinful acts, the more natural that way of life becomes to us (Ephesians



2:3). However, salvation results from changing our mind about sin and obeying the Gospel through faith (2 Corinthians 7:10; Acts 2:38-39) – [an obedient faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26) rather than a dead faith (James 2:17, 20, 26)] – which leads to baptism for the remission or the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:15-16;

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Acts 22:16). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]. Living by [obedient] faith gains us the victory over sin and death (1 John 5:3-5; Revelation 2:10).

When we consider our past condition and our new hope, grace actually teaches us to live differently. Paul explained it thusly. ***“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”*** (Titus 2:11-12). The receipt of grace ought to humble us to the point that we change our very lives. Every ounce of pain and torment that Jesus experienced paid the penalty for our sins. In other words, He suffered on the cross so that we did not have to suffer eternally. He took upon Himself the punishment that was due us.

This newfound life we enjoy should be spent serving our Heavenly Father. Why? ***“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy”*** (1 Peter 2:9-10). Not only should we serve our Heavenly Father, but we should do so with joy and gratefulness. There is no greater work than to help others gain their heavenly home. We should be more than glad to share the Gospel, pray for others, lead others in gaining biblical understanding and encouraging faithfulness. This work brings our Lord glory and honor. Therefore, let us serve our God with joy while we have breath in our lungs!✝

Ralph Clevinger preaches for the Greenville Church of Christ in Greenville, Tennessee, USA.

KENNEY'S PENNIES

“I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life” (Psalm 119:93 NKJV). I wonder how many have forgotten these precepts or have ever been taught these? The educational institution does not hesitate to step in to do what it deems the home fails to teach. How is it doing on teaching morality lessons?



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH

Joe Ed Furr

David and Solomon said that our earth will remain forever. Isaiah taught that the reason the earth exists is for the purpose of human inhabitation. The implication seems to be that if the earth will remain forever, it will be inhabited forever. Jesus said,

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). If the earth will remain forever,



then what is God’s will for it? David says, *“The righteous shall possess the earth and dwell upon it forever”* (Psalm 37:29). Jehovah’s Witnesses use the above argument as their proof that this earth will be the “new earth” – our eternal home. So, they say, all the saved will not go to Heaven, but instead, most will remain on this earth in its “new” form forever. This idea is not merely a footnote in their teachings, but this is one of their cardinal doctrines. If you have experienced difficulties talking about the will of God with a Jehovah’s Witness, it is because we do not share a common belief with them concerning the destiny of man and

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of earth. Many of their other religious doctrines are rooted in this belief about the future destiny of earth; so, we must meet this issue. In this essay, we will discuss the destiny of the earth and its meaning to the righteous.

David and Solomon did say that this earth would remain forever, but they were not speaking about an absolute eternity. The word **“forever”** that they used meant “an indefinite period of time.” This same word was used to describe the tenure of the Law of Moses. We know that the Law of Moses was taken out of the way and replaced with the Law of Christ; the Law of Moses did not last for an absolute eternity. The same word **“forever”** was used to describe how long the Hebrews would inhabit the land of Canaan. Yet, history proves that the Hebrews have not inhabited the land of Canaan perpetually in an absolute way. **“Forever”** is also used to describe how long Hebrews could keep foreign people as slaves. Yet, no Hebrew owns slaves today. These illustrations help prove that the word **“forever”** was not an absolute term.

However, there is a second Hebrew term meaning “forever.” This second term suggests an absolute eternity. David did use this term once in describing the tenure of the earth, and so we need to consider the context of that Scripture, too.

Read all of Psalm 37. From the general reading, one can sense that David did not describe man’s future Heaven; rather, we can clearly see that he described the righteous man’s blessings in his lifetime and in his family’s future through the course of human history. The main theme of the chapter is **“for evil-doers shall be eliminated, but those who persevere in the Lord, they shall inherit the earth”** (Psalm 37:9). No righteous man faces the threat of the extinction of his family from the earth, but evil men do face such a threat. Righteous people will always abide in the land as long as the earth shall be inhabited. When David used the seemingly absolute word **“forever”** in this chapter to describe the duration of the earth, he used that word in context with the first word **“forever,”** which means an indefinite period. The use of both terms that mean **“forever”** in the same context shows us that David used both terms with the same implied meaning – an indefinite period of time. This conclusion is supported by David’s later description of the earth. **“Thou didst found the earth of old, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They**

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shall perish, but Thou remainest. They all shall wear out like a garment; like a coat Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed” (Psalm 102:25-26). When a coat is worn out, we do not try to rethread it and thereby renew it for longer wear. We discard it and get another coat. God is going to treat the earth in the future the same way we treat worn out coats.

If this earth were going to remain forever as the eternal home of the righteous, it is strange that supposed evidence of this can only be found in the Old Testament. No such evidence can be found in the New Testament. Consequently, Jehovah’s Witnesses will never quote the New Testament to prove the eternity of this earth. In the New Testament, we read, *“the heavens will pass away; the burning elements will be dissolved; the earth too and the works in it shall be burned up... the blazing heavens will be dissolved and the burning elements melted”* (1 Peter 3:10-11). We also read, *“Then I saw a great white throne and the One seated upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them”* (Revelation 20:11).

Millennialists who want to see this earth reused for a future existence try to explain the burning of the earth by suggesting that God’s fire will merely purge this earth of its evil works and leave it ready for a future existence. They compare this fire to the surgeon’s heat that sterilizes his instruments. However, sterilizing is not the purpose for this heat. This heat is going to melt and to dissolve the earth. Surgeons do not melt their instruments to sterilize them. The sterilizing theory suggests that the earth will remain, but John claims it will flee away from the presence of God.


Jehovah’s Witnesses suggest that the *“heavens and earth”* that will be destroyed refers to the kingdom of Satan, not the physical earth. They deduce this from the way the Bible describes Satan’s kingdom, but their interpretation is a hypocritical one. They insist that the *“heaven and earth”* of 2 Peter 3:10 is symbolic, but Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that the same term in verse 2 Peter 3:13 is literal. It is more consistent to say that if *“heaven and earth”* in verse ten is not literal, then the same terms are not literal in verse thirteen.

Yet, didn’t the apostle Paul write about the future of the earth, suggesting it will not be destroyed? Paul seemingly suggested that the entire creation of God (the whole universe) is presently enslaved in a state of change and

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decay. The whole universe is presently awaiting a coming change in the state of things. A day is coming when the universe will be free of change and decay, and in that day, it will begin to find its real fulfillment. If this is true, then it is this same material universe that will be our eternal home.

Yes, Paul suggested that the present universe will play a part in the future glory of the children of God, but whatever that role will be, it will result from a process of liberation or change. Paul paralleled what will happen to creation to what will happen to Christians when we enter our eternal home. What will happen to Christians? Paul said that our present material body will be changed into a spiritual body. If there is a parallel here, then the future role of this universe will have to undergo vast modifications before it could play any role in eternity. If our universe does undergo vast changes, then it will no longer be the same universe. Jehovah's Witnesses argue that in eternity this earth will be restored to its original state before the fall of man. However, Paul taught that this universe will not be restored to its original form. He explained that this universe will be completely changed into a state never before known in human history.

We do know that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. However, the new earth will not be this earth, and its surrounding heavens will not be the heavens we now see since this earth and its heavens will be destroyed by fire. For this reason, let us not store up our treasure of hope in this planet that is growing old. Jesus admonished, ***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth”*** (Matthew 6:19), and yet, this is the very admonition Jehovah's Witnesses ignore as they proclaim a gospel concerning the glorious future of this earth. If all they said about this earth were true, then mankind could lay up for himself all the treasures he wanted upon earth. Instead, Jesus said, ***“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”*** (Matthew 6:20). Why should we do this if earth is going to be our future home? You can see from this that Jesus points our hope in the opposite direction of the hope of the Jehovah's Witnesses [and renewed earth religionists ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*]. 

Source

Furr, Joe Ed. “The Future of the Earth.” *Firm Foundation* 8 Sep 1970, 567.

Be Afraid. Be Very Afraid (Fear God)


Denny Petrillo

Nobody likes being scared. It is a very uncomfortable feeling. Usually when we're scared, we feel powerless. We just don't know what is going to happen next.

There have been many who have argued that the biblical admonition to "*fear God*" (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10) really means "respect God" or "reverence God." While no one would say that we should not respect and reverence God, is this really what the word means?

If fear actually means respect, then we have John saying "perfect love casts out respect" (1 John 4:18). Does that make *any* sense? Are we somehow supposed to transition out of respecting God? Of course not! So, fear does **not mean respect**. We should respect God our whole lives, but we shouldn't fear God our whole lives.

Now apply the same point to the word "reverence." Is John saying that "perfect love casts out reverence"? Of course not! So, fear **does not mean reverence**. We should have reverence for God for the duration of our lives.

What, then, is the application? God wants us to understand that we will – like it or not – face Him in the Judgment. We will be judged according to our deeds, whether good or evil (2 Corinthians 5:10). That is a scary thought. That is frightening! So, what should be our response? Obedience. It is that simple. God has told us what He wants us to do. When we "*walk in the light*," we have nothing about which to worry because Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). 

Denny Petrillo is the President of Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, USA.



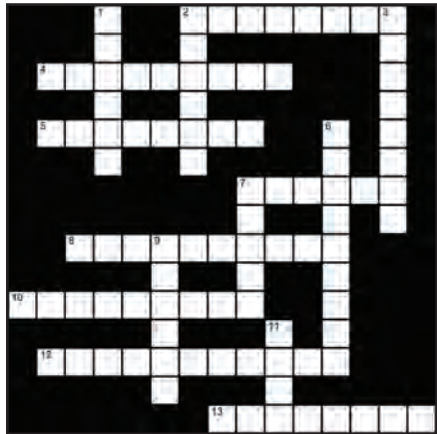
Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

OCCUPATIONS OF THE BIBLE

Across

- 2 What were the wise and foolish men? Matthew 7:24-27
- 4 Jesus was the son of a _____. Matthew 13:55
- 5 Jesus gave His life for His sheep in the role of what? John 10:11
- 7 He had a dream. Genesis 40:5
- 8 Occupation of Aquila, Priscilla and Paul. Acts 18:1-3
- 10 What was Naaman's job in the army? 2 Kings 5:1
- 12 What did Alexander do for his livelihood? 2 Timothy 4:14
- 13 Aholiab had what kind of job? Exodus 38:23



Down

- 1 This man plows his field for planting. Isaiah 28:24
- 2 What does the word lender mean? Proverbs 22:7
- 3 They cast lots for the robe of Jesus. John 19:23-24
- 6 Uzziel did what for a living? Nehemiah 3:8
- 7 He offended Pharaoh. Genesis 40:1
- 9 Simon was a _____. Acts 9:43
- 11 What high job did Melchizedek do? Genesis 14:18

See inside back cover for the solution.

Paul

David Conley

Just seeing his name makes one think of his great accomplishments. How zealous he was for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It didn't matter if he was rich or poor, free or bound, healthy or wounded, he had **one thought** in mind – **to preach!**

Paul was so passionate about the Gospel being preached that he actually said, *“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, **whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice**”* (Philippians 1:15-18).

Paul was **glad** that Christ was preached even if the preacher was doing it for the **wrong reason!** Wow! Paul's enemies were preaching Christ out of *“contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds,”* but Paul did not care! He was glad that Christ was preached!

He said that he did not care about his heritage, his education, his past religion or his past religious status! In fact, Paul said that he considered all of those things to be manure in order to *“win Christ”* (Philippians 3:4-8). He told the Corinthians, *“For though I preach the gospel, **I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!**”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).


In the last letter that we have which Paul wrote, he told Timothy to *“**Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine**”* (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul wanted to give Timothy instructions in his final words to **preach!** He wanted to be sure that the Gospel was going to be carried on after he died!

Paul was concerned that the Gospel would be changed and twisted,

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and so he gave a serious warning. *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8).



He knew that Satan could influence anyone to turn from the truth. He even said, *“But I keep my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”* (1 Corinthians 9:27). 

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

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Something by Which to Remember Me

David R. Kenney

Writing in the modern era has changed in ways that are difficult to assess. We have so many mediums to share ideas that it is hard to imagine the circumstances of writing an epistle in New Testament times. For example, we send a text to someone, and we have conditioned ourselves to receive an immediate response or wonder why we have not received one. Letter writing and delivering then was both time consuming and costly. The materials used were nothing like the quality of materials we have at our fingertips. Writing was not just a task but a profession, and the efforts to preserve that writing were also so formidable that preservation became a form of evidence of validity. The oldest extant copy of Philippians is P46 (A.D. 125-225) and contains all four chapters.

Paul's relationship with this congregation began with the Macedonian Call, circa A.D. 51 (Acts 16:9-10). I always found it interesting that the call was from a man, but when Paul arrived, he met Lydia and a group of women who helped begin the church. How many of our church buildings today remain open due to godly women? The apostle Paul wrote about A.D. 62 from prison in Rome. His circumstances were dire, but he wrote an epistle of joy that benefited its immediate recipients and all those who have read it through the centuries. One wonders if Paul gave thought to the possibility this would be the last epistle he would write to this congregation and decided to give the Philippians something by which to remember him. The epistle of Philippians was a work of love and joy, which is as profitable to us today as it has been to others who have appreciated the love and the joy Paul expressed to his fellow Christians.

I have been planning four lessons about the epistle, but many others could be given. The thrust of these lessons is an effort to capture some of the positive thrust of Paul's writing. I have selected an expression from

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each chapter for us to explore.

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21 NKJV). In Chapter 1, we see that Paul encouraged the Philippians to confirm Christ in their lives, to preach Christ to others and to live for Christ in such a way as to influence others in conversation and conduct. People are watching us, and they examine our character whether we are aware of them

doing so or not. Are we living for Christ regardless of what the costs may be? Are we trying to convert others to Christ by our words and actions? Paul put all of his life on the line for Christ. He had the mindset that his death would be gain. How could he say that? Paul could state that because he knew



the rewards of Heaven far surpassed any pleasures that this world may offer. How many are ready to go to Heaven **someday** rather than **today**? Paul was ready to depart, but Jesus had more work for him to do. We may be ready to depart, but Jesus may have more worship and service for us to do. We may be in circumstances that will inhibit our ability to feel happy, but there is a difference between being in circumstances that feed feelings of happiness and being in any circumstance and having joy with Christ! Some equate the Christian life with pleasant circumstances, happy feelings or leisure days. This is a mistake. Paul lived his life in very difficult circumstances, but it was to be all gain for him. Why? Because he lived for Christ! For whom or for what are we living? Live for Christ!

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“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Sometimes we may forget that Jesus left Heaven to come to Earth. Why did He come? Jesus told Zacchaeus’ critics, *“Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:9-10). There were those who thought Zacchaeus was unworthy to have the Lord in his home, but these were not the thoughts of Jesus. Our Lord demonstrated that while we are all sinners, we are worthy to have Him as our Savior because of His love. If He loved and served us, then, we ought to love and serve others, too. Jesus came as a bondservant, and He expects us to be servants to one another. There are all kinds of thoughts that Jesus could have had, but Paul focused on Jesus’ thoughts of leading by serving (Matthew 20:25-28). Do we lead by serving?

“I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:8). Saul of Tarsus had a promising career before him. He was circumcised the 8th day and of the tribe of Benjamin, so there was no doubt about his ancestry. He was a Pharisee, and Pharisees had the reputation of being defenders and protectors of Judaism (Philippians 3:5). Paul stated he had the finest of educations from the famed Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3). He also was a natural born citizen of the Roman Empire (Acts 22:28). Paul or Saul was **up and coming** as seen in being commissioned to prosecute Christians and *“the Way”* (Acts 26:12). However, all of that changed when he met Christ Jesus on the road to Damascus. The conversion of Saul remains a powerful proof for the validity of Christianity today as it did back then. *“Then all who heard were amazed, and said, ‘Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?’ But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ”* (Acts 9:21-22). Why would Paul sacrifice so much, even counting it as *“loss”*? Because of the excellencies to be found in being a Christian! Saul of Tarsus had everything going for him, but without Jesus, he realized he was going nowhere. Knowledge of this changed Saul’s life, and knowledge of Christ

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Jesus will change our and other's lives, too.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). The apostle Paul had a mission. It was not an easy or a pleasant one. Recall what Ananias was told about Saul's mission. ***“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake”*** (Acts 9:15-16). The first part of his mission may have sounded grand, but the latter part would give some pause. Indeed, Paul suffered much for the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:22-28). Did he ever regret this? Did he ever wish he were not an apostle? No. ***“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”*** (1 Timothy 1:12-13). Paul went through so much for the cause of Christ. Are we so willing? Perhaps we think we are unworthy. Well, Paul thought the same, but he realized Jesus was merciful to him. Jesus is merciful to us also. **Regardless of our past, we have a great future with Christ!**

The apostle Paul certainly gave us an epistle by which to remember him. May we read, meditate and ingest these truths in our own lives that we may have the mind of Christ. By faith and obedience to Christ's will, we can look back at our lives without regret. No matter what we may have lost in this world, we will have great gain from the Lord when He says, ***“Well Done!”*** Notice that the word ***“done”*** implies doing! Are you doing what the Lord has commanded you to do? 

David R. Kenney is a preacher who resides in Bedford, Ohio, USA. His “Kenney's Pennies” also appear in *The Voice of Truth International*.

[Editor's Note: Often, as I back our car out of the driveway and prepare to drive away, and as I survey the meticulously attended lawn and shrubbery, I jest with my wife, “Just put on my headstone when I die, ‘At least the lawn looked nice.’” Of course, we **want** to be remembered for more than lawn care or some other relatively inconsequential activity. Even more, Christians **need** to be remembered for much more than merely how nice our yards looked. For what will you be remembered? ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

[Micah 6:6-12]

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

9 The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

From the beginning, evidently God required sacrifices from humans, as penalties for their sins. We see this first with Cain and Abel: Cain who offered sacrifices from his fields, and Abel who offered from his flock. Whether Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable because of his attitude or because God had required a blood sacrifice, or both, we do not know.

With the passing of time, humanity became so filled with wickedness that God sent the flood to wipe out the entire creation, except for Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Even today, the deceit, cheating, lying, violence and murder of the masses of humanity are evidence that the destruction of the world as promised in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 will take place.

In contrast to the evil practiced in the world, what does God ask of His obedient children? To deal justly with others, to show mercy to those who need it, and to live humbly, knowing that we, too, are sinners and are continually in need of forgiveness.

Scripture Reading

Rebecca Rushmore

Someone submitted a statement and a question, thusly: “Reading of Scripture prior to the sermon seems to be of recent origin. Does the one who reads the Scripture have to be a baptized believer?” We will consider the statement and the question separately.

Rather than being of recent origin, public reading of Scripture is an **ancient practice** among the people of God. Nehemiah did this. “*So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading*” (Nehemiah 8:8 NKJV). Centuries later, Jesus Himself illustrated the practice of the Jews to read Scripture and afterward to expound upon it.

So He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

Years later, the apostle Paul preached following the reading of Scripture in a synagogue (Acts 13:14-41). He noted that Scripture was read publicly weekly in the synagogue (Acts 13:27). Likewise, the apostles and the elders of the church in Jerusalem observed that historically Scripture was read

BIBLE QUESTIONS

weekly in the synagogues, accompanied by preaching (Acts 15:6, 21).

In the present day, some congregations read Scripture preceding preaching, whereas others do not follow this practice. The New Testament **does not stipulate** that Scripture **must** be read apart from preaching, in which preaching one would hope that Scripture is read or quoted. Especially expository preaching necessitates the reading of Scripture in the process of exposing the text.

Now to the question that was posed. There are biblical instructions regarding acceptable worship by the Lord's church. The apostle Paul corrected the Corinthian congregation for not observing the Lord's Supper properly (1 Corinthians 11). Chapter 14 of the same epistle provides directives concerning the participants in public worship – for preachers, leaders of prayers, song leaders and men versus women. Forasmuch as this passage advocates male worship leaders, it also presumes that the preachers, leaders of prayers and song leaders are baptized believers and faithful Christians. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that should a male occupy the function of reading Scripture in public worship that he is a Christian.

I am aware that some congregations have their little boys take part in reading Scripture or even leading some songs in worship – as an encouragement and a training exercise. Another venue, outside of public worship, would be more biblically defensible, though. What, then, when a little boy who has been publicly reading Scripture, leading singing or even preaching brief sermons during worship is no longer a little boy and has not obeyed the Gospel? Is there a danger of giving the impression that as the boy grows, he is already acceptable to the church in its public worship, although he was never baptized? Does using unconverted boys in public worship cheapen the roles of Christian men who preach, lead prayers, lead singing and read Scripture publicly? A better practice would be to teach boys how to read Scripture aloud, lead singing, lead prayers and teach or preach, and after they obey the Gospel of Christ, then, add them to the roster of Christian males who actively participate in public aspects of Christian worship. ✝

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

BIBLE QUESTIONS

How Many Times Do I Have to Be Baptized?

Thomas Baxley

“If baptism is where sins are forgiven, how many times do I need to be baptized? Do I need to be baptized after every time I sin?” This is a frequently asked question, and so it is good for us to have an answer ready. The simple answer is found in Acts 8, the story of Simon the Sorcerer. When Philip preached the Gospel and worked miracles, he convinced many, including Simon, and they were all baptized (12-13). When Peter and John came to give the miraculous portion of the Spirit, Simon attempted to buy power to pass on the gifts and fell into sin in the process (18-19). Peter immediately confronted Simon about his sin and warned him not that he needed to be baptized again to forgive this sin but to repent and to pray for forgiveness (22). Once we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27), our sins are continuously forgiven as long as we walk in the light (1 John 1:7). †



[Editor’s Note: We discern that the New Testament charges Christians to repent and pray for the sins of which they are aware, and that additionally, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses sins of which the children of God may be unaware, as long as they walk in the light of the Gospel. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

History and the Bible

D. Gene West

In 1830, John Nelson Darby, the dictatorial leader of a religious group in England called “The Plymouth Brethren,” began to preach the doctrines that are now known as Dispensational Premillennialism. His preaching of these doctrines split The Plymouth Brethren into two groups with Darby’s group being called the “exclusive assembly,” and those who opposed him were called the “open assembly.” Darby preached his five-point platform of Premillennialism with a zeal that defied imagination, especially for a man of such frail physical nature as his was. He took some very stubborn stands on issues regarding the Scriptures, and one of those was that he would not allow history, which he held in deep contempt, to enter into his study of the Bible. From him, O.T. Allis, in his book *Prophecy and the Church* (p. 26), quoted the following: “I do not admit history to be, in any sense, necessary to the understanding of prophecy. I do not want history to tell me Nineveh or Babylon is ruined or Jerusalem in the hands of the Gentiles.”

Herein lies one of the greatest problems in any attempt to deal with Dispensationalists, and that is they either wish to ignore history altogether, or they want to create their own. They simply will not admit that the history that the Bible itself records, or with which the people of the Bible were involved, ever even happened. They wish to make all Bible prophecy future to us because they will not admit any historical event, though the Bible clearly shows the interaction between heaven and earth in history. The reason for that is if they admit that any prophecy of the Bible can apply to any nation of people who were ever on earth, they know their whole system of Premillennialism falls under its own weight. The reason they move indiscriminately between the Old and New testaments, making little distinction between the prophecies of the two, is that they simply will not recognize what has happened in the history of Israel and the other nations of the world.

Though Dispensationalists do not want to admit “...history to be in any sense necessary to understanding prophecy...,” the plain fact of the

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matter is that one can read of the fulfillment of the prophecy in the history of this world both sacred and secular. The nations mentioned in the Bible did exist, and they did interact with the people of God as history says they did, and that cannot be denied by anyone, including Dispensationalists. Their theology does not allow them to admit that the ruins of Nineveh, Babylon and Jerusalem exist because they use the prophecies that spoke of the destruction of these and other cities, while attempting to prove some kind of a future Utopian millennium for us.

However, God said through his inspired prophet Nahum that Nineveh would be destroyed never to rise again, and it happened. The evidence of it can be seen today. Babylon lies in ruins today, never to be rebuilt, just as such great prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel said would come to pass, and the prophecies applied to them cannot legitimately be applied to the *end of time*. One may certainly ignore a thing, but that does not mean it did not happen! The manner in which these theologians deal with history, by denying that it ever happened or that it has any bearing in any way upon what the Bible teaches, is disingenuous to say the very least.

Friends, God has always interacted with man in history. That is the only way He can interact. When Israel was called out of Egypt to be formed into the nation through whom the Messiah would come, that was history. When God had Nebuchadnezzar destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C. in order to keep a pure remnant of people through whom the Messiah could be born, that was history. When Jesus established His kingdom on the earth in A.D. 30, that was history – history that can never be destroyed no matter how much it is ignored. The Bible cannot be separated from history! †

D. Gene West (1936-2018) was a Gospel preacher and an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, USA.

Love One Another The church is often accused of being the only group that shoots its wounded. Paul told the Galatian Christians, *“But if you bite and*

devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (Galatians 5:15 NKJV). Always be certain your firing squad is not in a circle.

Cecil's

COMMENTS

Caleb: A Man of Courage

Therman Hodge

Introduction:

1. Caleb was one of the heroes of Israel.
2. He had the faith and courage to obey God to his fullest ability.
3. He is first mentioned in Numbers 6 as the representative of the tribe of Judah to spy out the promised land and bring back a report.
4. Each one had to be a leader in his tribe.
5. Caleb was truly a courageous leader.

I. Moses sent the spies into Canaan (Numbers 13:18-20).

- A. Moses gave the spies a specific assignment.
 1. Their assignment was not to determine if they could conquer the land.
 2. God had already made that determination.
- B. Moses encouraged the spies to be of good courage.
 1. Instead, ten of the spies brought back an attitude of fear.
 2. The “people are strong.”
 3. The “cities are fortified.”
 4. There are giants in the land that made us feel like grasshoppers in their sight.

II. Caleb made a fervent appeal (Numbers 13:30-33).

- A. Unfortunately, the majority of the spies influenced the people, and they were afraid to enter the land, even though God had already given it to the Israelites (Numbers 13:2).
 1. Only Caleb and Joshua stood firm in their encouragement and insistence that with God’s help and power they could take the land.
 2. Caleb sensed the uneasiness of the people as they listened to the reports of the ten spies.
 3. Caleb, with a different voice, calm and with confidence, attempted to overcome their fears.

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4. The faith and courage of Caleb contrasted with the lack of faith and courage of the ten other spies.
- B. Caleb's life demonstrated courage and faith in God.
 1. Unlike the ten, he was not controlled by fear of the Canaanites.
 2. He was a *can-do* person.
 3. He saw the same things that the others saw, but he knew that faith meant to step out and see what God can do.
- C. Caleb and Joshua were men relying on God, urging the people to take the land.

III. A lack of faith brings destruction, whereas instead, loyalty brings reward (Numbers 14:1-10).

- A. Caleb and Joshua were threatened with stoning because they insisted the Israelites could take the land.
 1. The people's problem was not a problem of strength but of faith (Hebrews 3:19).
- B. God told the Israelites that all those over 20 years old would die in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33-37):
 1. Because of their lack of faith and courage,
 2. Because of their failure to trust in God,
 3. Because of a failure to follow His instructions.
- C. The exception to this decree would be Caleb and Joshua (Numbers 14:38).
- D. Because of his faith and courage Caleb was given a special reward (Numbers 14:24).

IV. Faithful obedience to the law of right and justice brings the highest praise that can be bestowed upon a person.

- A. Such service always attains the richest reward for time and eternity.
- B. This principle of fidelity to God should govern us in the small affairs of life as well as in the larger ones.
- C. It is only by adhering to this principle, as well illustrated by Caleb, that true men and women are made.

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Conclusion:

1. Caleb claimed his reward, which God through Moses had promised him (Joshua 14:6-13).
2. Christians need to know and to remember the promises of God.
3. Caleb realized that there was much to do to occupy the land. He realized that just because God had promised it to him did not mean that he would not have to fight and work for it.
4. Christians, just as Caleb, must depend on God for the source of their courage.
5. Caleb remained faithful during the 40 years in the wilderness, just as Christians must remain faithful throughout their lives (Revelation 2:10b).
6. Today, we must remember that God is on our side and that we must not get the grasshopper complex as the ten spies did (Numbers 13:22). Obviously, they forgot God. †

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

Robison's Rubies

On the first day the Gospel of Christ was preached, Peter exhorted people, ***“Be saved from this perverse generation”*** (Acts 2:40). Later, Paul urged Christians to be ***“blameless and harmless”*** lights to ***“a crooked and perverse generation”*** (Philippians 2:15). The different original Greek words for “crooked” and “perverse” mean “opposed to” or crooked and distorted or corrupt. Their corrupt generation had literally killed the Christ! Then, the pagan world fought against Christ’s influence. Our generation fights against the Christ, as well. People seem to fear the good life that He offers. Many in society want to oust Christ not only from the public square but from each private mindset. That is just as crooked and perverse now as it was then. ***“Be saved from this perverse generation.”***

CHARTS & OUTLINES

The Grace of God

Mark N. Posey

Thesis: Paul’s inspired view of the Gospel of the grace of God!

Text: Acts 20:24

Song: “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!”

Introduction: Paul viewed himself as a **rock** (none of these things move me); **accountant** (I count); **runner** (I may finish my race); **steward** (the ministry which I received); **witness** (to testify); **undeserving recipient of a precious and glorious gift** (the Gospel of the grace of God).


Discussion: What was Paul’s understanding of grace?

1. The **gulf** between God and man. Paul knew that the grace of God was needed because of the gulf between God and man, a gulf that man could never span with his own righteousness and goodness (Romans 3:10-12, 23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:11-12). God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).
2. The **gift** from God to man. Paul viewed grace as a gift (1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:15, 17). He thanked God for His “unspeakable” (*anekdiēgētos* – indescribable) gift. God’s indescribable gift is Jesus, the greatest gift ever given and received. Paul’s statement clarifies the deep meaning of one of the most beloved Scriptures in God’s Word – John 3:16.
3. The **gain** for man from God. Some gifts are given but are of little value, yet not so with grace. The recipient of Heaven’s grace receives a generous and abundant gift called eternal life (1 Timothy 1:13-15; 1 Peter 3:7b). Notice the specific areas of gain associated with grace: **life** (Romans 5:17), **riches** (2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 1:7; 2:7), **salvation** (Titus 2:11; 2 Timothy 1:9), **everlasting consolation** and **good hope** (1 Thessalonians 2:16; Philippians 1:21-23), and **opportunities** for serving our Master (Ephesians 3:2, 7-8; 1 Timothy 2:7). Grace “appeared” (*epiphaino* from *epí* = upon + *phaino* = to shine, English = epiphany) - to shine upon and so to become visible and to be made


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clear or manifest.

4. The **gamut** to all men from God. Webster defines “gamut” as, “an entire range or series.” Thus, the grace of God is directed toward the entirety of humanity (Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 22:17). God’s amazing grace, mercy, favor and love are described by Paul in Ephesians 3:18. It is **wide** enough to include every person, **long** enough to last through all eternity, **deep** enough to reach the worst sinner and **high** enough to take us to heaven.
5. The **grounding** by God for man. God’s grace teaches us to presently live “*soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*” (Titus 2:12; see also 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:2). Grace is both restrictive (“*denying*”) and inductive (“*we should live*”) in nature; it is both positive and negative in teaching us how to live.

Conclusion: Paul’s words lift us. “*So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified*” (Acts 20:32). God’s grace is amazing. 

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



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PROVERBS 17:22



Three mothers were sitting on a park bench talking about (what else?) how much their sons love them.

Sadie said, “You know the Chagall painting hanging in my living room? My son, Arnold, bought that for me for my 75th birthday. What a good boy he is and how much he loves his mother.”

Minnie said, “You call that love? You know the Eldorado Cadillac I got for Mother’s Day? That’s from my son Bernie. What a doll.”

Shirley said, “That’s nothing. You know my son Stanley? He sees a psychoanalyst on Park Avenue five sessions a week, and what does he talk about? Me!”



A large passenger plane was on its way across the Atlantic. It was flying consistently at about 500 mph and at 35,000 feet, when suddenly an F-22 Raptor appeared. The pilot

of the fighter jet slowed down, flew alongside the Airbus and greeted the pilot of the passenger plane by radio: “Airbus, a boring flight isn’t it? Take care and have a look here!”

He rolled his jet on its back, accelerated, broke through the sound barrier, rose rapidly to a dizzying height, only to swoop down almost to sea level in a breathtaking dive. He looped back next to the plane and asked, “Well, how was that?”

The airplane pilot answered, “Very impressive, but now have a look here!” The jet pilot watched the plane, but nothing happened. It continued to fly stubbornly straight, with the same speed.

After five minutes, the plane pilot radioed, “Well, what do you say now?”

The jet pilot, confused, asked, “What did you do?”

The other laughed and said, “I got up, stretched my legs, went to the back of the flight to the bathroom, got a cup of coffee and ate a cinnamon cake.”



A local business was looking for office help. The manager put a sign in the window stating: “HELP

PROVERBS 17:22

WANTED. Must be able to type, must be good with a computer and must be bilingual. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer.”

A short time later, a dog trotted up to the window, saw the sign and went inside. He looked at the receptionist, wagged his tail and then walked over to the sign, looked at it and whined.

Getting the idea, the receptionist got the office manager. He looked at the dog and was surprised, to say the least. However, the dog looked determined, so he led him into the office. Inside, the dog jumped up on the chair and stared at the manager. The manager said, “I can’t hire you. The sign says you have to be able to type.” The dog jumped down, went to the typewriter and proceeded to type a perfect letter. He took out the page and trotted over to the manager and gave it to him, then jumped back on the chair. The manager was stunned but then told the dog, “The sign says you have to be good with a computer.”

The dog jumped down again and went to the computer. The dog proceeded to enter and execute a perfect program that worked flawlessly the first time. By this time the

manager was totally dumbfounded!

He looked at the dog and said, “I realize that you are a very intelligent dog and have some interesting abilities. However, I **still** can’t give you the job.” The dog jumped down and went to a copy of the sign and put his paw on the sentence that told about being an Equal Opportunity Employer. The manager said, “Yes, but the sign **also** says that you have to be bilingual.”

The dog looked at the manager calmly and said, “Meow.”



A Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest met at the town’s annual picnic. Old friends, they began their usual banter.

“This baked ham is really delicious,” the priest teased the rabbi. “You really ought to try it. I know it’s against your religion. You just haven’t lived, though, until you’ve tried Mrs. Frobisher’s prized Virginia baked ham. Tell me, Rabbi, when are you going to break down and try it?”

The rabbi looked at the priest with a big grin, and said, “At your wedding.”

How Do You Measure Up?

- + Let love be without hypocrisy.
- + Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
- + Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love,
 - + in honor giving preference to one another;
 - + not lagging in diligence,
 - + fervent in spirit,
 - + serving the Lord;
 - + rejoicing in hope,
 - + patient in tribulation,
 - + continuing steadfastly in prayer;
 - + distributing to the needs of the saints,
 - + given to hospitality.
- + Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- + Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
- + Be of the same mind toward one another.
- + Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.
- + Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
- + If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.
- + Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Romans 12:9-17

Noting Your Bible




Emily Fisher

The Mystery of God

Many people define the word “mystery” as something that cannot be understood or something that is shrouded in incomprehensible ambiguity. However, the Word of God does not use it predominantly in this manner. Instead, the Bible portrays “mystery” as something that was hidden or secret (although the clues were there) but later was fully made known. There are things kept hidden or dimly lit throughout the Old Testament concerning man’s salvation that have been brought to light – revealed completely in the New Testament. The “mystery of God” is such a one and is a central topic of the New Testament. What is this mystery? Let’s open the Bible and look at the context of these passages to see the importance of this subject.

1. Begin by turning to **Daniel 12**. Read the whole chapter in context and write beside verses 4-9, **“The full meaning of this prophecy is hidden from Daniel (closed up/sealed); the mystery is revealed fully in the New Testament (See 1 Corinthians 2).”**
2. Turn to 1 Corinthians 2 and note around verses 6-13, **“Before the mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles, people couldn’t imagine the glorious Gospel (See Romans 11:25).”** Also, you may want to note 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 along with chapter 2 in context.
3. In Romans 11 (again, read the whole context here) and write, **“Paul did not want them to be ignorant of the mystery (See Ephesians 6:19).”** Note also Colossians 2:2 – the mystery is understandable.
4. Turn to Ephesians 6, noting, **“Paul prayed to speak boldly this mystery (See 3:3-7).”** Note also Colossians 1:24-29 and 4:3 – mystery proclaimed.
5. At Ephesian 3, write, **“Mystery explained – verse 6 – Jew & Gentile in ONE body! (See 1:7-14).”**

6. Go to the first chapter of Ephesians and note the following, **“Mystery was made known at the fullness of the times (Revelation 10:7); gather in ONE in Christ (See Acts 15:1-11).”** Furthermore, in Ephesians 1 underline **“in Him”** in verses 9, 10, 11, 13 (Ephesians 2:11-18; 5:32). You may also want to note here Paul’s use of pronouns – verse 12: **“we who first trusted in Christ”** – verse 13: **“you also...”** – verse 14: **“our inheritance.”** The Holy Spirit revealed to Paul that the Jews (those who first believed, Acts 2) and the Gentiles (you also when you heard the word of truth, Acts 10, 19) now share the inheritance because of Christ’s blood. This is good news, indeed! Take time to read the whole book of Ephesians and the conversions in Acts 19.
7. Now turn to Acts 15:1-11, read about the meeting in Jerusalem, noting especially verses 8-11, and write, **“God making no distinction between Jews and Gentiles was difficult for the Jews to accept (See Acts 10:44-48).”**
8. In Acts 10, we have the record of God acknowledging the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit (they miraculously spoke in tongues). Acts 11:1-18 bears this out again. Note next to these chapters, **“The promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 2; Joel 2 – “all flesh”) (See 1 Timothy 3:16).”**
9. In 1 Timothy 3:16, write, **“called the mystery of godliness (See 3:9 – called the mystery of the faith and deacons were to hold it in pure conscience) (See 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).”**
10. In 1 Thessalonians 2, note Paul’s warning, **“Those refusing Gentiles salvation are hostile and not pleasing to God (See Romans 16:25-27).”** Paul spoke by inspiration of this topic either in explanation or warning in every book he wrote (except Philemon).
11. Lastly, turn back to Romans 16:25-27 and underline the words, **“mystery,” “now made manifest,” “for obedience to the faith.”** The revelation of the mystery by the Holy Spirit to all nations is the Gospel of Christ – that all people, irrespective of ethnic background, no matter that a group of people (Israel) were deemed God’s chosen children for thousands of years (in order to bring the Messiah into the world), **now if we obey, Christ has made in Him ONE special people** (Genesis 12:3; 26:4; Galatians 3:19-29; 1 Peter 2:4-10)!

Note: This study only touches the surface of this wonderful topic in Scripture, and I encourage you to study more deeply on this subject of the mystery of God. 

Emily Fisher is a missionary, a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and works with World Evangelism. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



Rebecca Rushmore

1. Who did Paul say was a faithful minister of Christ to the church at Colosse?
2. Who created all things?
3. For what other city did Paul feel a great conflict?
4. How did Christ take away the “handwriting of requirements”?
5. Where is Christ?
6. Why should Christians forgive fellow Christians?
7. Why should fathers avoid provoking their children?
8. Who did Paul say he was sending to Colosse?
9. In whose house did the church meet?
10. The church at Colosse was instructed to exchange epistles with the church in what other city?

(answers inside back cover)



Bible Word Scramble

Rebecca Rushmore

Write the first letter of each word indicated in the passages below.
Then, unscramble the letters to find the theme of the verses.

Matthew 7:7 8th word _____

Matthew 7:8 5th word _____

Philippians 4:6 16th word _____

1 Timothy 2:1 3rd word _____

1 Timothy 2:2 16th word _____

1 John 5:14 16th word _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

QUESTIONS I HAVE ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON, PART 1

Shane Fisher

The Book of Mormon (hereafter *BOM*) claims to be another book inspired by God in addition to the Bible. If the *BOM* is from God, then we ought to accept it. However, if it did not originate from God, then it ought to be rejected. We need to be like the Bereans and investigate whether these claims are true or false (Acts 17:10-12). I have read through it several times and have many questions for Latter-Day Saints. My hope is that brethren will use this list of questions as an evangelistic tool to help a Latter-Day Saint to come to the truth (John 8:31-32).

(1) Why did God choose to reveal directly to Joseph Smith the *BOM* in Elizabethan English rather than eighteenth-century English (the era in which he lived)?

(2) The story starts with Lehi, a Jew, who lives in Jerusalem, during the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah (1 Nephi 1:2-4). It is said Lehi's family line had learned Egyptian (1 Nephi 3:19). Why did they learn the language of the Egyptians? Why would they write the record in the Egyptian language instead of the Hebrew language? Here is the reasoning given in Mormon 9:32-33 (401-423 A.D.): "And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; **and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold we would have no imperfection in our record. But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth**

FROM THE HEART OF

our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof” (emp. mine). Is Moroni claiming imperfections since it was not written in Hebrew? If so, how is that consistent with true inspiration that requires inerrancy since God is the author of perfection (John 10:35; Titus 1:2)? Furthermore, three Nephites (living in the first century A.D.) were to tarry on the earth carrying out the ministry until the second coming of Jesus Christ (See Mormon 8:10,11; Ether 12:17; 3 Nephi 28:4-10). Why were they not informed where the records were hidden and why did God not give them the task of translating the reformed Egyptian record? Why the wait for 1,400 years for Joseph Smith, Jr. to come?

(3) If the native Americans did originate from the Lamanites, then why did not these Native American tribes speak and/or write in the Egyptian or Hebrew languages that would have been taught to them?

(4) We also learn Lehi is a prophet who foretells of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (1 Nephi 1:4). God tells Lehi in a dream to get his family out of the city because there are Jews who seek to kill him (1 Nephi 2:1) and go into the wilderness. 1 Nephi 2:4-5 states, “And it came to pass that **he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance** (emp. mine), and his gold and silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness. And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea...” One LDS researcher has identified the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim as the location of the river of Laman (1 Nephi 2:8-10) [Potter 1999]. From Jerusalem to the Gulf of Aqaba, the distance is about 155 miles. From there to the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim is about 74 miles. That is 229 miles, one way! The narrative continues with God coming to Lehi in a dream in 1 Nephi 3:2-4, “And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that **thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem** (emp. mine). For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass. Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers

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should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness.” Why did the Lord not command Lehi to retrieve the genealogical plates of brass in Jerusalem **before** they ventured out into the wilderness (1 Nephi 2:1-6; 3:1-10)?

(5) In 2 Kings 24:10-18, the Bible states, “*At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ...Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. **None remained except the poorest people of the land.** And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king’s mother, the king’s wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.*” The events of the BOM supposedly took place in the first year of King Zedekiah (1 Nephi 1:4) **after** 2 Kings 24:10-18. Nephi’s uncle, Laban, is very rich because he had a treasury. 1 Nephi 4:20 states, “And after I had done this, I went forth unto the treasury of Laban. And as I went forth towards **the treasury of Laban** (emp. mine), behold, I saw the servant of Laban who had the keys of the treasury. And I commanded him in the voice of Laban, that he should go with me into the treasury.” Why was he not taken off into captivity? The Bible says that only the poorest people of the land remained. Why was Laban spared?

(6) In 1 Nephi 2:4, it states, “And it came to pass that he [Lehi-SF] departed into the wilderness. And he **left his house, and the land of his inheritance** (emp. mine), and his gold and silver, and his precious things...” When Nephi and his brothers returned to Lehi, they showed Lehi the genealogical plates and Lehi discovers he is a descendant of Joseph (specifically Manesseh – 1 Nephi 5:14; cf. Alma 10:3). Why did Lehi – a Jew who had dwelt his whole life in Jerusalem (1 Nephi 1:4) not know his genealogy? How did he know the land of inheritance that belonged to him was his land if he did not know his genealogy? It was very important for Israelites to have known genealogical

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information. **First**, each tribe had received a land inheritance (Joshua 21-22). For an Israelite to inherit land in a specific tribal area would have required evidence (thus a genealogy) that he descended from that particular tribe. **Second**, genealogies were important because they confirmed whether or not a Jewish male could serve in the priesthood (Numbers 3:8-15). **Third**, genealogies were kept meticulously for tracing out the line of the Messiah who would come from David (2 Samuel 7:12-14; Matthew 1; 22:42).*

(7) 1 Nephi 4:38; 10b-14a states: “And it came to pass that we [Nephi, Sam, Laman, Lemuel - SF] took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the tent of our father... my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph.” Is this not a vast amount of literature that would have required a lot of plates of brass?

(8) 1 Nephi 4:22-26 states, “And he [Zoram – Laban’s servant, - SF] spake unto me [Nephi - SF] concerning the elders of the Jews, he knowing that his master, Laban, had been out by night among them. And I spake unto him as if it had been Laban. **And I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings, which were upon the plates of brass, to my elder brethren, who were without the walls** (emp. mine). And I also bade him that he should follow me. **And he, supposing that I spake of the brethren of the church** (emp. mine), and that I was truly that Laban whom I had slain, wherefore he did follow me.” Do you really expect one man – Nephi – to have carried all these plates out of the city of Jerusalem? What does Nephi mean by “the brethren of the church?”

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(9) 1 Nephi 5:17-19 states, “And now when my father [Lehi - SF] saw all these things, he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy concerning his seed – That these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed. **Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish** (emp. mine); neither should they be dimmed any more by time. And he prophesied many things concerning his seed.” Where are these non-perishable plates of brass today?

(10) According to 1 Nephi 7:1-5, Nephi and his brethren were commanded to go up to Jerusalem a second time to find wives in order to raise families in the land of promise. Why did the Lord not command Nephi and his company to complete that task while they were in Jerusalem earlier? Keep in mind this is another round trip of around 400 miles.

(11) 1 Nephi 7:22-8:2 states, “And it came to pass that we did come down unto the tent of our father. And after I and my brethren and all the house of Ishmael had come down unto the tent of my father, they did give thanks unto the Lord their God; and they did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto him. And it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind. **And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness** (emp. mine) he spake unto us...” How could Nephi and company have “gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind,” both of grains and of fruit in the wilderness?

(12) Why does Lehi reveal the mystery of Christ before it was to be made known according to the apostle Paul in the first century A.D. (Ephesians 3:1-7; Colossians 1:24-2:3; 1 Corinthians 2:7-8; Romans 16:25-27)? Lehi “prophesied” in 1 Nephi 10:11-14 (**supposedly written between 600-570 B.C.**): “And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews, and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles. Yea, even my father spake much concerning the Gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be

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compared like unto an olive tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the land of promise, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine, after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, the natural branches of the olive tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.”

Gary Summers stated it well.

The Bible tells us that there are some things that were not made known until Jesus and the apostles made them known. We must remember that, although the prophets spoke of future things, they did not understand them. They searched diligently to try to figure out WHEN the things they prophesied of would be fulfilled, as well as what their words did “signify” (1 Peter 1:10-11). They testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, but they did not comprehend their own message (1 Peter 1:12). So how can we explain that the Book of Mormon can summarize the whole process of salvation and even preaches “a remission of sins” (a description used only in the New Testament)? (Summers 413)

This same argument can be applied to many other chapters of the *BOM*.

(13) Nephi has grand visions of the future given to him by God. He foresees Jesus being born of a virgin (1 Nephi 11:19-21), being baptized by John (11:27), His miracles (11:31), the crucifixion (11:33), etc. Further down the stream of time, Nephi sees “among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church... an abominable church” (1 Nephi 13:4, 6). Who is this great and abominable church? Its identity can be discovered based on later details in this “prophecy.” **First**, Nephi foretells “a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters... and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land” (1 Nephi 13:12). This has been identified as Christopher

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Columbus. **Second**, verses 17-19 foretell of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). The “great and abominable church” had to have been formed sometime after the first century A.D. because of the story found in 3 Nephi that after Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:9-11) He descended into the Americas and appeared to the Nephites. Jesus ordained twelve apostles in America (1 Nephi 12:6-10; 3 Nephi 19:1-30). Therefore, the “great and abominable church” had to have formed between the second and fourteenth centuries. This must be either referring to Roman Catholicism or some generic apostasy. Earlier LDS writings claim it is Roman Catholicism while the modern LDS church’s interpretation claim that it is a generic apostasy. Either way, notice that “the great and abominable church”: “[they] have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away” (1 Nephi 13:26). Did Roman Catholicism or a generic apostasy corrupt the Scriptures? When and where did this corruption take place in the history of its transmission? We have thousands upon thousands of copies of the New Testament and there is no evidence of corrupting any of the fundamental doctrines. The *BOM* makes a false assertion that cannot back up its claim! Thus, it is not inspired of God!

(14) What were the “precious things” in the Bible that were taken away by the corrupted church or a generic apostasy? What one superior truth has the *BOM* revealed that was not given by the Bible that “*thoroughly equips man unto every good work*” (2 Timothy 3:17)? Was it: (a) the self-existent, independent, self-sustaining, eternal and absolute Being who is known as God, (b) the Trinity, (c) the spirit of man and his immortality, (d) angels, (e) freedom of choice, (f) the moral law that shows us what is good and evil, (g) the standard of truth that reveals what is true and false, (h) accountability and responsibility to God, (i) the day of judgment and rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked, (j) God’s providence, (k) the avenue of prayer, (k) revelation from God of which man could not have attained unless God wanted him to know, (l) the inspiration of chosen men for revealing God’s will, (m) miracles as evidence for confirmation of new revelation, (n) prophecy, (o) sacrifice for sin, (p) the atonement of Christ for all men, (q) Christ serving as the one Mediator between God and man, (r) the ultimate Leader

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in redemption from sin, (s) Christ giving us the perfect body of teaching for spiritual growth, (s) Christ as the ultimate example to follow, (t) Christ as the object of our faith, love and full, dedicated devotion, (u) the incarnation of Jesus in the flesh, (v) regeneration and sanctification, (w) terms and conditions of salvation – faith, repentance, confession and water immersion for the remission of sins, faithfulness, (x) a life of righteousness, (y) the life of each individual, family, nation and mankind to be molded and shaped by the will of God, (z) the regulation of all thought, action and life in every relation of life and sphere of action, such as marriage and family, (aa) each person elevates himself in love, righteousness and self-sacrifice, (bb) endless growth, (cc) the resurrection and glorification of man’s body, (dd) the system of absolute truth to be believed, worship to be performed and rules of life to be lived (ee) and the church of Christ as the perfect organization that Christ built throughout endless generations until Christ’s return.**

There are more questions to be asked about the Book of Mormon in future *Voice of Truth International* issues. †

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*These ideas were taken and summarized from <https://www.gotquestions.org/genealogies-Israel.html>.

**These ideas predominantly came from the *Braden-Kelley Debate*. *The Old Paths Book Club*, Rosemead, California, 1955, 22-23.

Shane Fisher is one of the editors of *The Voice of Truth International*, a missionary and works with World Evangelism. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 48)

1. In simplicity and godly sincerity
2. There were no hidden meanings to what he wrote.
3. Macedonia, and next to Judea
4. He was not fickle. He did not change his mind lightly.
5. Silvanus and Timothy
6. Yes and Amen
7. God
8. Holy Spirit
9. God
10. He wanted to spare them.
11. Fellow-workers
12. sorrow

Scavenger Hunt (page 101)

1. Epaphras (1:7)
2. Christ (1:16-17)
3. Laodicea (2:1)
4. "nailed it to the cross" (2:14)
5. "sitting at the right hand of God" (3:1)
6. Christ forgave them (3:13)

Bible Word

Scramble (page 102)

prayer

Bible Find (page 78)



7. so the children do not become discouraged (3:21)
8. Tychicus and Onesimus (4:1, 9)
9. Nymphas (4:15)
10. Laodicea (4:16)

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