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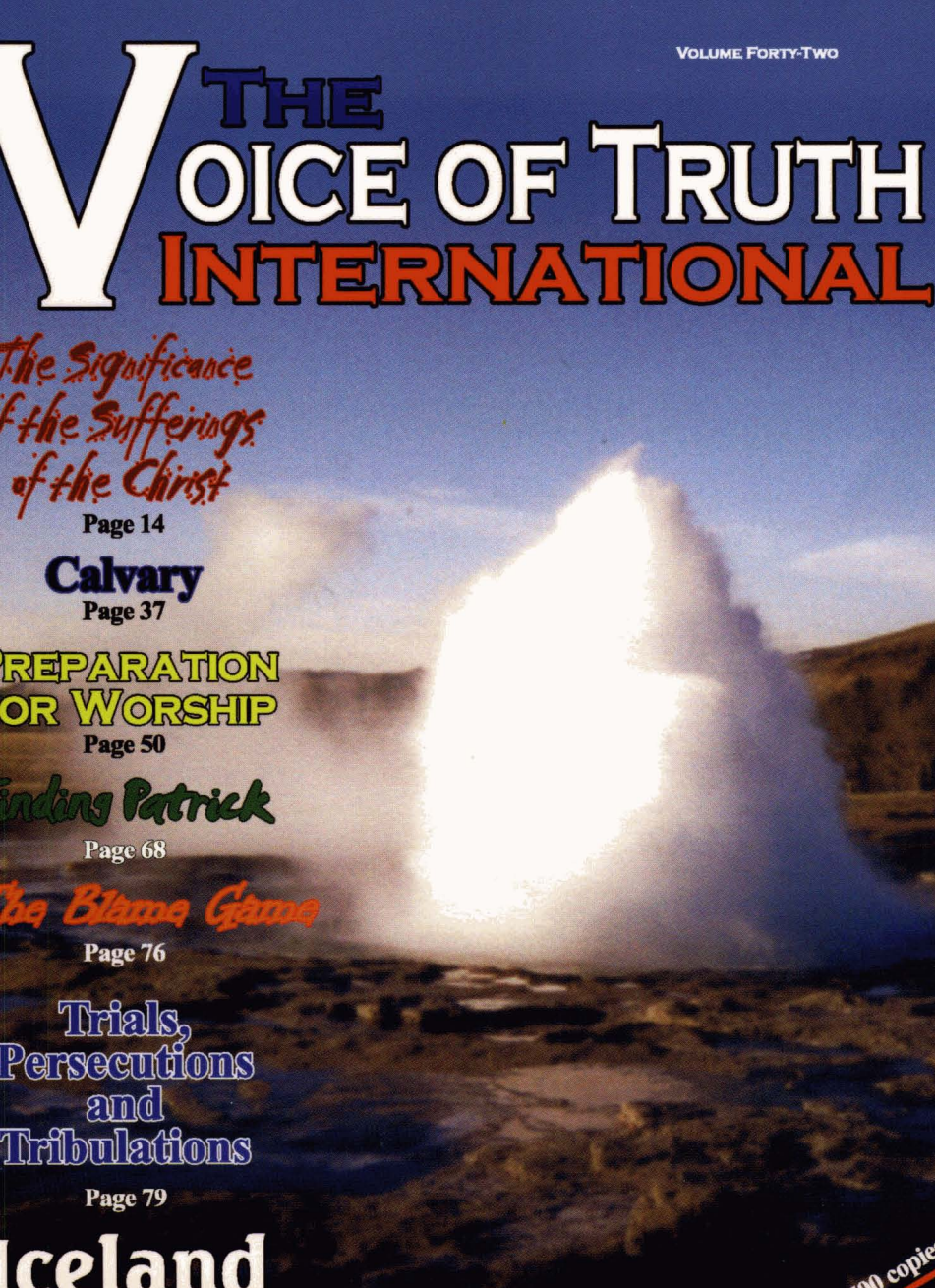
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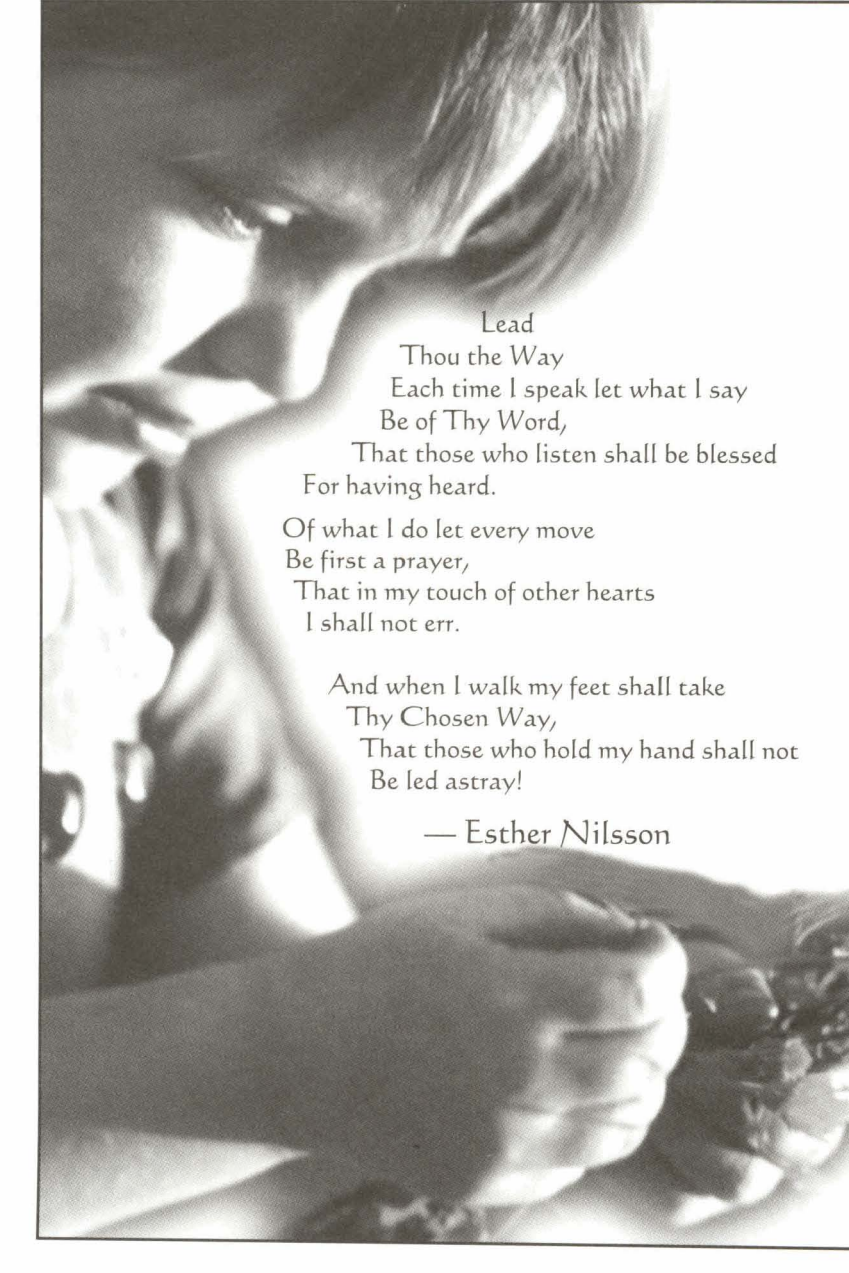
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Persecutions
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Lead
Thou the Way
Each time I speak let what I say
Be of Thy Word,
That those who listen shall be blessed
For having heard.

Of what I do let every move
Be first a prayer,
That in my touch of other hearts
I shall not err.

And when I walk my feet shall take
Thy Chosen Way,
That those who hold my hand shall not
Be led astray!

— Esther Nilsson

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

ACTS 2:38

HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

“So then faith comes by HEARING, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

BELIEVE CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD

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

REPENT OF SINS

“I tell you, no; but unless you REPENT you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

CONFESS CHRIST

“Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may [be baptized].’ And he answered and said, ‘I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God’” (Acts 8:37).

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

“He who believes and IS BAPTIZED will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

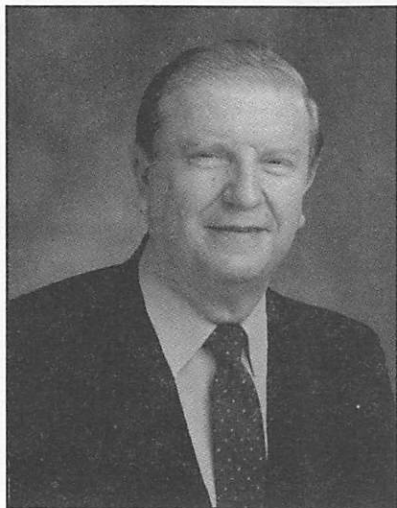
SINS WASHED AWAY IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

“...Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3,4).



Unity in Christ

**There is ONE BODY and
ONE SPIRIT, just as you were called in
ONE HOPE of your calling;
ONE LORD,
ONE FAITH,
ONE BAPTISM;
ONE GOD and Father of all,
who is above all, and through all, and
(Ephesians 4:4-6).**



IS ANYBODY OUT THERE THINKING?

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

As I drive through cities in my country, I see numerous church buildings, many of which are large and modern, indicating that hundreds attend. And I also see the many names of those churches, representing different teachings and ways of worship. I hear their radio sermons and see their TV programs. Those churches represent different organizations, in opposition to one another, with their own staffs, pastors, reverends, bishops, and money spent on their programs and outreach.

When I am in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and other countries, I not only see a number of different church buildings, but I also see the Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, the Buddhist stupas, and other places of worship. They all represent the same: the efforts of men to reach out and worship some superior being.

Only in Christianity is there a saviour, Jesus Christ, and only in Christianity is there a resurrected Lord. All other leaders who began a religion are dead, but even while they were alive they did not claim the power to save any one, not even themselves.

But what happened to the church that Christ promised to build (Matthew 16:17,18), and did build? Read about this in Acts 2. Then, as you read through the New Testament you will see that in the first century there was only one church: the one Christ died for (Ephesians 5:15), the one that cost His blood as purchase price (Acts 20:28), the one that wears His name (Romans 16:16; Acts 4:12), and the one of which He is the sole head (Colossians 1:18), and saviour (Acts 5:23), and the one for which He will return one day (Ephesians 5:25). The church of Christ — the church that belongs to Christ — is the church that is made up of the saved, those who

have obeyed the gospel (Mark 16:16), being born again and added to the church by Christ (Acts 2:47).

After that church had its beginning, it grew and spread throughout the world. But Paul said that the day would come when there would be a “falling away” (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4). Many of the Lord’s people would apostatize. Sadly, history records that this very thing happened. A minority remained faithful to the Lord and have continued as His church to this day. They are the smaller group, and they receive little attention except from those who find fault with it, condemn it, and do everything they can to oppose it.

The larger group, which developed into the Catholic church, later divided into the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Catholic Church. Then the larger of these, the Roman branch, was opposed in the 1500’s by Martin Luther who struggled to reform that church because of the wickedness he saw in its doctrine and practices. That led others to take the lead in what was called the Protestant Movement.

Out of this desire to “reform” came all of the modern-day denominational groups. Some believe one thing and some believe another. They follow the teachings of men along with, or instead of, the Bible; they wear names assigned by men, preach against the oneness of the Lord’s church, and tell people that they can be saved in a variety of ways.

All of this brings shame and disgrace to the Lord and His teaching. Why? Because these people portray themselves to the world as representatives of Christ, as teachers of His Word, yet their beliefs, practices, and organizations are not at all what the Scriptures teach. In many cases, the misrepresentation of God and Christ are so great that I have often made the statement, “If that was all I knew of ‘Christianity’, I would reject religion altogether. With the lies told about God and His word, by these who misrepresent Him while claiming to follow Him, it is amazing that anyone is willing to believe.”

And, most tragically, both the Catholic church and the denominations that came out of it stand together in opposing and condemning **the very church that Christ built, died for, and is saviour of, right on up to this very day!**

Oh my friends, who out there is thinking? Do you ever stop to wonder about these things? Do you ever have one thought, one question as to where all of the religions and denominational groups came from? Do you ever wonder about your church and the differences between it and the church that you read about in the Bible? Do you read God’s word? Do you wonder about the church that Christ established and if it still exists in this world, and

if so, where it is located? Do you wonder whether you are a member of that church? Do you ever ask where the Baptist church came from, who established it, and about its doctrines that differ from the Bible? Do you wonder how the Lord's church can be the *Methodist* church or how the Methodist church can be the *Lord's* church? Do you ever wonder where the Pentecostal churches, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh Day Adventists, and hundreds of others, came from? My friends, *they did not come from the Lord. You don't read about them in the Bible!* Do you think that you can be members of those organizations that were not begun by Christ, and yet please Him and go to heaven? Evidently many do believe that, but surely you haven't really studied and thought these things through.

I am not trying to be critical and ugly and hurt your feelings by saying these things. I am trying to get you to think, and study, and do what the Bible teaches. Check me out too, while you're at it. Question me. I welcome your investigation. When people are willing to compare what they believe with what the Scriptures teach, man-made churches will be deserted.

My friends, if we would all study God's word, believe it, and do what it teaches then we would all believe the same thing, and obey the same gospel to be saved, and the Lord would add us to the same church, His church. *Who would want to be in some church that does not belong to the Lord?*

Of course you might argue that your parents were members of the church that you are a member of, and if was good enough for them it is good enough for you. But just because you are what they were religiously, that doesn't mean that that will save you. They were not the authority in religion; they were not God; they cannot save you! If they could speak to you now, they would surely urge you to obey the Lord and be a member of His church. If you know what the Bible teaches, then the only way you can be saved is by doing what God has asked you to do. If you do not, then you will be lost. (Yes, I know: when members of any religious group die, the preacher comforts the family with the assurance that the departed soul is in heaven. But if we have given our lives and allegiance to divisive denominational doctrines and churches, *where in the Bible does God assure us that He will take us to Heaven to be with Him eternally?*)

But why talk so much about the church? Because most are deceived and believe that one can go to heaven without being a member of it. Do you really believe that the Lord would build and die for something that is not important? No, the church is not the saviour. **Christ** is the saviour, but He is **the Saviour of His church**, and if that be true, then *the only way we can be saved is by being in that church*. How is that accomplished? By believ-

ing and obeying Him, as is recorded in Acts 2:38, so that He can save us and add us to His church (Acts 2:47).

I hear preachers on the radio and see some on TV preaching things that will not save, but will cause the souls in their audience to be lost, if they do what those preachers ask them to do. There is no such thing taught in the scriptures as the “Sinner’s prayer”. Neither can you read about most of the churches the radio- and tele-evangelists represent. They may be popular and accepted by the majority, but they do not represent the Lord. Please, please, read and study what the Bible teaches and do what it says. Only then can you be saved, and only then will the Lord add you to his church, and only then can you go to heaven, provided you are faithful to Him unto death. (Revelation 2:10).

I simply ask that you *think for yourselves*. And be concerned enough to *investigate*. Far too often the unspoken attitude of people concerning spiritual questions is, “If I don’t know, God will excuse me.” So they don’t question, they don’t study, they remain in *deliberate ignorance* about everything God says — and then they expect Him to save them **because they didn’t know!** But ignorance of law doesn’t excuse us even in the courts of the land, and God has made no promise to save us *because of our ignorance*. Rather, we are saved by the blood of Christ, and that blood cleanses our sins only when we seek the right way and find it (Matthew 7:13,14).

Don’t listen to any man or woman and let them deceive you and cause you to be eternally lost. Even in the days of Christ, He warned that there would be those coming who would claim that they were the Christ. He condemned all of the false teachings, and those who were doing the false teaching. Would He not do the same today? Surely *He would*, and *He does* in His word.

Now if you want to go ahead and listen to the teachings of men and do what they say — even when they contradict the clear commands of God — and be lost, then that is your business. You are free to do that. No one will stop you, not even the Lord; but remember that Christ said in John 12:48 that *His word will judge us in the last day*. We have His word now, as revealed in the New Testament, and if we refuse to hear Him and refuse to do what He teaches, we will have to reap the consequences on the day of the judgment when His word condemns us. Not even He will be able to save us from the choices we have made in this world.

These matters are left in your hands, with the prayer that you will do what the Lord has asked you to do, that you may be saved and go to heaven. †



HELP ME, LORD, TO REALLY REALIZE

Byron Nichols

It is somewhat strange, but an idea, an event, a philosophic point of view, or a personality can sometimes be the subject of considerable attention, but the appropriate amount of attention still be lacking. We may judge a matter to be of importance, but not of great importance. As a result, by our failure to give it the utmost

consideration that it truly deserves, we may actually slight something that we feel is *somewhat* significant. Hopefully these thoughts will serve as a suitable introduction to a discussion of a biblical topic that nearly all would agree is important, yet it is still quite possible that it is not in the spotlight as much as it needs to be. I am referring to the death of Jesus, and to the eternal significance of all that He did for us.

The Bible speaks repeatedly in prophecy and in historical statements regarding the fact of Jesus' human experience, His terrible physical and mental suffering, and His willingness to give His very life — and all of that being done for us, for all human beings who have ever or will ever live. Yet, the question continually calls for an answer — “How can we possibly give all of this the attention and emphasis that it deserves?”

In an attempt to help direct our attention to this subject of inestimable significance, let us look once again to the awesome inspired words of the prophet Isaiah, which are recorded in Isaiah chapter 53. Begin reading with me at verse 1:

“Who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

Now notice especially verses 4-6. I have chosen to call attention to the emphatic use of the contrasting personal pronouns, because these so eloquently stress what Jesus, the innocent, did for each one of us, the guilty. Reading these verses slowly will help the magnitude of these statements to prick our hearts with the immensity of our guilt and the dreadful price that Jesus paid in our behalf.

*“Surely **He** has borne **our** griefs and carried **our** sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But **He** was wounded for **our** transgressions, He was bruised for **our** iniquities; the chastisement of **our** peace was upon **Him**, and by **His** stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to **his** (our) own way; and the Lord has laid on **Him** the iniquity of us all.”*

Regardless of the number of times that we may have read these words, how can we possibly consider them again without being overwhelmed anew with the burden of our guilt and with the unfathomable grace and mercy of Jesus in becoming the sacrifice for our sins?

Our English translation of some words is sometimes inadequate to reveal the depth of meaning contained in the original biblical languages. Such is the case in verse 5 where we read that Jesus “*was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...*” The scholarly W. E. Vine has stated that these two words, *wounded* and *bruised*, were the strongest terms used to describe a violent and agonizing death. We need to be duly impressed with the intensity and fierceness of the suffering of Jesus for us. What a testimony to the vicarious suffering of Jesus as He substituted **Himself** for us on the cross!

All of this has to raise the soul-searching question — “How can we possibly ever repay Jesus for what He has done for us?” Friends, we must make Him our master and allow Him to truly become our Savior through our obedience to His commands for our life. He purchased the right to be our master by paying for our sins in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). It is imperative that we realize, however, that there is absolutely nothing that we can ever do that will repay Him; nothing will settle our indebtedness to Him. It is most assuredly true that our obedience is essential to our salvation, but it cannot repay Him. Our obedience is an appropriate expression of our profound gratitude to Him, but we cannot repay Jesus — only His sacrifice, grace, and mercy can cover our indebtedness.

We need to read Isaiah 53 repeatedly and regularly. These words will change our lives by helping us to really realize just what Jesus did for us. †

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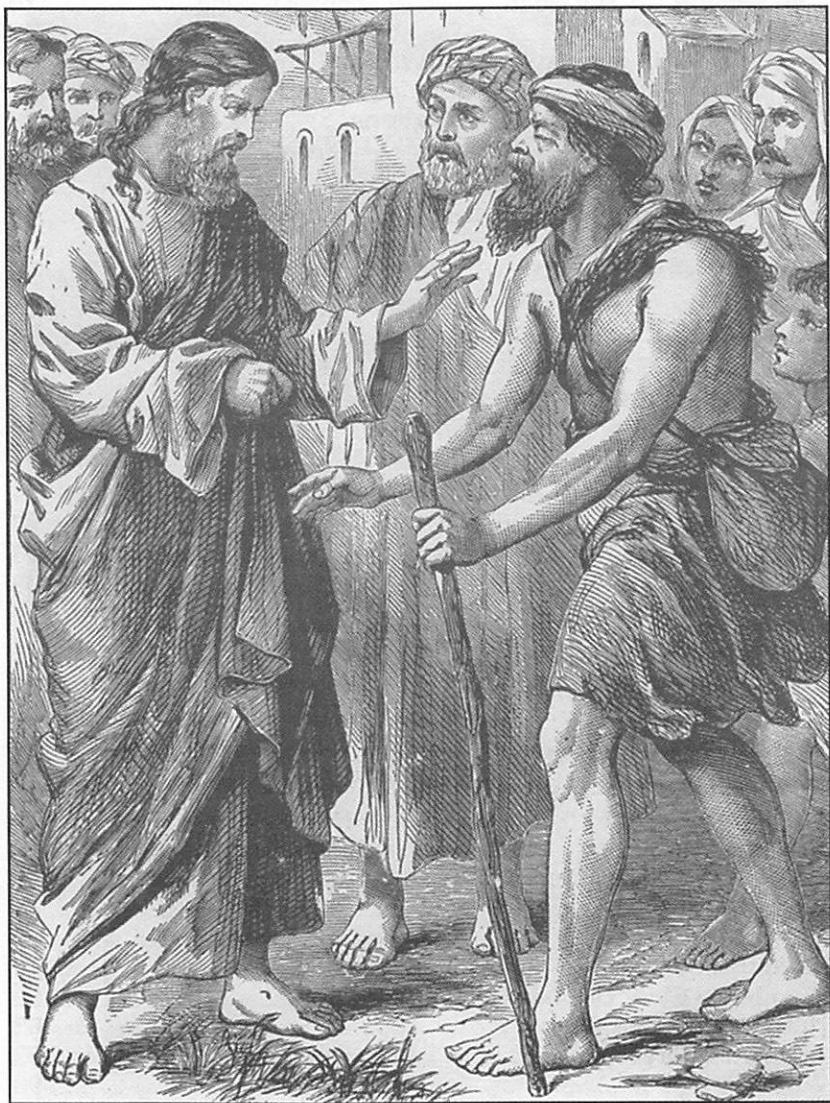
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GOD



Do You Believe in the Son of Man?

Rod Kyle

GOD

Healed by Jesus, the former blind man stands before Jesus (John 9:35), who asks, “*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*”

A good question. One which is also the most important spiritual question you will ever have to answer. Like the former blind man, you would be justified in asking, “*And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?*” (verse 36).

Jesus Christ claimed to be sent to earth by the Creator (John 6:29). He assured His disciples that He was the only way back to God (John 14:6). He promised eternal life and a future resurrection to everyone who believes in Him (John 6:40). So how do we know He was real? Could He have been merely a deluded psychotic?

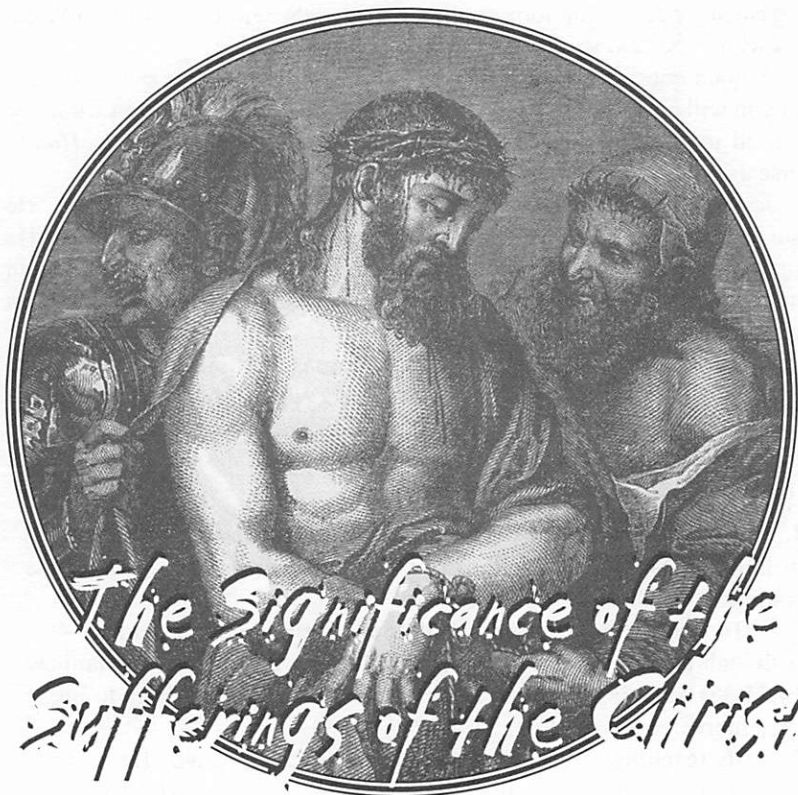
Aware that people would ask these questions of Him, He willingly held Himself up for examination — John 10:37,38. What “proof” did He tender?

Into four gospel accounts is compressed the most amazing life ever lived! In a selective way, the writers of these biographies present four areas of proof.

- 1. He fulfilled prophecy.** This was important to Jesus. He refers to it in Luke 24:44. He fulfilled every Old Testament prediction about the coming Messiah — over 350 of them!
- 2. He performed genuine, indisputable miracles** (John 11:47). Although a man walking on water might grab our attention (Matthew 14:24-33), stopping a funeral procession to bring the dead back to life is even more impressive (Luke 7:11-17).
- 3. His teachings were, and still are, without parallel.** He was the first teacher to announce the “Golden Rule” for successful living — Matthew 7:12. His enemies said of His teaching, “*Never did a man speak the way this man speaks*” (John 11:34). But overshadowing all of these proofs hangs one of far greater magnitude.
- 4. He was resurrected!** He promised it beforehand (John 2:19). His enemies anticipated it (Matthew 27:62-66). Yet it happened anyway! Unlike Mirza Husayn Ali and all other world religious leaders, Christ’s mortal remains are not with us. This crowning miracle makes dead liars out of all of them. The evidence for the empty tomb is overwhelming.

This evidence demands a verdict. Is your response that of the man of John 9:38? †

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Plymouth, New Zealand.



The Significance of the Sufferings of the Christ

Kevin Cauley

By now, no doubt, you have heard of the movie, **"The Passion of the Christ"** directed by Mel Gibson. The subject of the film is, more or less, the last twelve hours of the life of Jesus. I saw the movie this past week. It accurately, vividly, and gruesomely portrays what the physical experiences of Christ must have been when He was delivered up by the Jews to the Romans for crucifixion.

I have heard in the media, and even from some professing Christians, negative reactions to the consideration of Jesus' excruciating trial and death. In this regard, one is prompted to ask, *why should we consider the sufferings of the Christ?* Is it not merely a form of self-inflicted torture, an attempt at penance through mental flagellation? We would answer a resounding, "No!"

GOD

First, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ because Jesus was God in the flesh.

Without the doctrine of the *deity* of Christ, the *sufferings* of Christ would be loveless. When we consider that Jesus was God Himself and took on the form of man to redeem sinful man from the clutches of Satan, we recognize the true love of God. Through sin, man became God's enemy, but through Christ, man can be God's friend once again. Jesus said, "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:14-16). Paul wrote, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). It was on account of God's love for His creation that Jesus died on the cross. The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider God's love for us*.

Second, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ because Jesus was the Son of God.

Without the *doctrine of the sonship* of Jesus, the *sufferings* of the Christ would be unnecessary. When we consider that Jesus was the Son of God, we think that He came from the Father Himself. And when we think that the Father sent Jesus into this world, we must understand that the sufferings of Christ were necessary to accomplish what God, the Father, wanted to accomplish for the salvation of man. We read in John 8:28,29, "*Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*" Jesus loved His Father and so He obeyed and suffered. The sufferings cause us *to consider Jesus, the obedient Son of God*.

Third, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ because Jesus lived a sinless life and did not deserve what He went through.

Without the doctrine of the *purity* of Christ, the *sufferings* of Christ would be worthless. When we consider the sinlessness of Christ, we recognize that the sufferings of Christ had true value. Counterfactually, if Jesus had sinned, then He may have merited what He received. However, since

GOD

He was indeed sinless, we know that those sufferings are worth far more than the most precious of substances on this earth. They were made valuable by His sinless life. Peter wrote, *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:18,19). The sinless life of Jesus makes His blood precious. The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider His innocence and worth.*

Fourth, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ because it was for our sins that Jesus suffered.

Without the doctrine of the *atonement* of Christ, the *sufferings* of Christ would be purposeless. When we consider that Jesus died for our sins, we recognize that His death was on our behalf. We are the ones who merited, on account of our sins, that suffering and death. But Jesus took our place and atoned for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* We read further in Romans 5:10,11 *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."* The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider our worthlessness, guilt, and need for redemption.*

Fifth, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ because that will lead us to His resurrection.

Without the *resurrection* of the Christ, the *sufferings* of the Christ would be powerless. When we consider that Jesus, after having suffered and died, was resurrected from the tomb, we recognize that this is where God's power truly lies. This is God's power of salvation for man today, the message of the cross, the gospel (Romans 1:16). Paul writes in Philippians 3:10,11 *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."* We also read in 1 Corinthians 1:18 *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider the power of His gospel.*

Finally, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ because that will motivate us to live more faithfully to God.

Without the doctrine of the *perseverance* of the Christ through His *sufferings*, we would have no foundation upon which to place our faith. We go back to our prior question: Is seeing such a picture as “**The Passion**” not simply a form of self-inflicted torture, an attempt at penance through mental flagellation? Admittedly, one cannot experience such a portrayal of our Lord’s sufferings without being emotionally moved to great depths. But far more is involved than simple emotions. When we consider the fact that Jesus endured the cross:

It *motivates* us to endure the pressures which come into our lives as well.

It *motivates* us to live a better life.

It *motivates* us to study God’s word more.

It *motivates* us to worship God, as God wants us to worship Him.

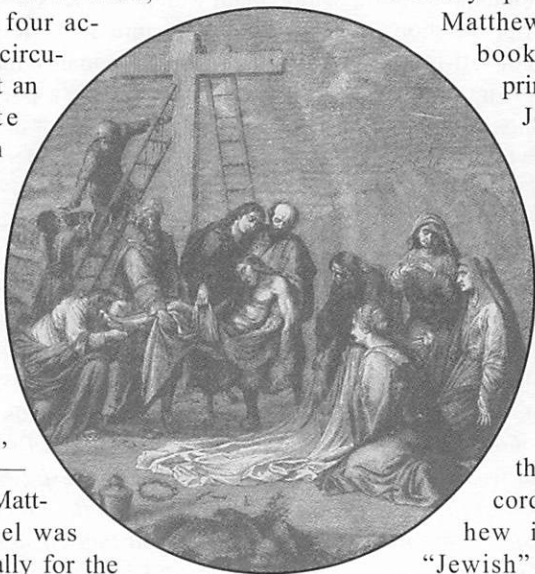
It *motivates* us to help the poor.

Jesus endured this life and the death that is associated with this life. Through Him, we can endure, too! The writer of the book of Hebrews exhorts us to look “...unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” The sufferings of Christ cause us to consider our own faithfulness to Him.

So we don’t see “**The Passion of Christ**” merely to gape at a tragic and gruesome spectacle. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:16, “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*” For the Christian, the sufferings of Christ mean so much more than merely the physical travesties that He endured. We consider the sufferings of Christ today in light of the doctrines that were taught by the Him. Jesus Himself said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*” (John 6:53). His flesh is the bread of life. That bread is His teaching. “*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*” (John 6:45). Ultimately, it is the belief of Christ’s doctrine in association with His sufferings that will bring one to salvation and move those who are saved toward greater service in the kingdom of Christ today. †

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Although all four accounts of the Gospel are unsigned, the first is traditionally ascribed to Matthew Levi. As far as we know, none of the four accounts ever circulated without an appropriate designation as to the author. Early church fathers — Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome — all say that Matthew's Gospel was written initially for the Jews, and this certainly appears to be the case. With a few exceptions, (e.g. "*Immanuel*," "*Golgotha*," "*Eloi*") he does not add explanatory notes when dealing with Hebrew terms and customs or when mentioning matters relating to the topography of Palestine. In his **Introduction to the New Testament**, Theodore von Zahn says:



"The apologetical and polemical character of the book, as well as the choice of language, make it extremely probable that Matthew wished his book to be read primarily by the Jews who were still exposed to Jewish influence, and also to Jews who still resisted the Gospel."

Certainly the Gospel according to Matthew is the most "Jewish" of the four, and throughout the book there is emphasis upon the fact that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah of the Old Testament, the one who has come in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and the One who would establish the Kingdom of God spoken of by the prophets. Matthew demonstrates initially to the Jews of his day (both believing and unbeliev-

Jesus, by Matthew

Rex Banks

ing), and then ultimately to all of every age, that in Jesus the ancient prophesies concerning the King and Kingdom are completely realized.

The Messianic qualifications of Jesus are set forth in the opening words of Matthew's account where we are introduced to "*Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham*" (1:1). Only in the seed of Abraham would all the nations be blessed (Genesis 12:3), and only a descendant of David could qualify to sit upon His throne in accordance with Old Testament prophecy (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

with Old Testament prophecy, Matthew uses the word "fulfill" some 13 times, the expression "it is written" some 9 times, and the question "have you not read" 7 times.

Above all, Matthew's Jewish audience needed assurance that Christ's death was not a defeat, and that the crucifixion took place in accordance with "*the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*" (Acts 2:23). Thus we find recorded Christ's own prophesy about His impending death (Matthew 15:21) and resurrection (Matthew 26:32). The account of His betrayal for 30

"Thou are the Christ, the son of the Living God"
(Matthew 16:16).

Following the introduction, Matthew continues to emphasize the fact that Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophesy: He is Immanuel ("*God with us*"), born of a virgin (1:22,23), as Isaiah had foretold (Isaiah 7:14); He was born in Bethlehem (2:6), as had been predicted by Micah (5:2); He went to, and was recalled from, Egypt (2:15), as per Hosea 11:1; He was announced by John, as Isaiah had prophesied (Matthew 3:3 cf, Isaiah 40:31); He cured all the sick who were brought to Him (8:16,17), that the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:4) might be fulfilled. In connection

pieces of silver (27:9), the division of His garments as He hung upon the cross (27:35), the abuse hurled at Him (27:39,43), and even His dying cry (27:46) are all said to constitute a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

Surely any honest Jew familiar with the Old Testament and confronted by Matthew's testimony would echo the words of Peter, "*Thou are the Christ, the son of the Living God*" (Matthew 16:16). Today our hope is to be found in this same confession. †

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Tough Questions For Unbelievers

Dalton Key



1. Assuming for argument's sake the validity of the "Big Bang" theory concerning the origin of the universe, and assuming also that the Big Bang occurred by natural, uncaused means in the absence of a God which you contend does not exist, **from whence came the energy and matter necessary for the Big Bang's occurrence?**
2. **How many times, and under what circumstances, has science observed and documented the phenomenon of nothing, given enough time, becoming something?**
3. If life began accidentally, without the aid of any higher intelligence, and then evolved into the many and varied forms of life now in existence, **why are we**, supposedly occupying the highest rung on the evolutionary ladder, **still unable to create life? Why are we unable to duplicate through human intelligence that which you attribute to mindless chance?**
4. **Which would seem a safer world for you, your children, and your grandchildren: a world where God's existence and presumed influence are acknowledged, or one in which God's existence is categorically denied?**
5. If God does not exist, and if we thus have no moral code issuing forth from Him, **what is your basis for determining murder to be wrong?** Many animals eat their young, kill for food, for mating rights, or for territory, and think nothing of it. They are not censured by each other or even by humans for following their "natural instinct". If we are only a marginally higher form of life than they, **upon what basis do you hold yourself — and others — to a significantly higher moral standard? On what basis are good and evil determined?** †

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Was the "Big Bang" Really Divine Creation?

Hershel Dyer



The prevalent theory in the study of universe origins is called "cosmic inflation". This theoretical explanation holds that our universe suddenly appeared out of "a point with no content and no dimensions, essentially expanding to cosmological size."

This theory, a variation of "the Big Bang", is now being taught at some of the most prestigious universities, including Stanford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Allan Sandage of the observatories of the Carnegie Institution in Pasadena, California, has even labeled the "big bang" origin as being a "miracle", in which some higher power must have played a role. One writer has commented: "this bears haunting similarity to the theological notion of creation 'ex nihilo' — out of nothing."

The foregoing theorizing has led many scientists to give serious thought to the coordination which may, necessarily, exist between science and religion. Even Carl Sagan, the astronomical scientist, made a radical change in his thinking. He had earlier contended that the Big Bang science would eventually show that the universe had no creator. However, before his death in 1996, he began to advocate science and religion studies.

Archeological science, long ago, began verifying the accuracy of Biblical Scripture in many places. It is continuing to do so now as more of the past is uncovered by "the pick and spade". The faith in the integrity of Holy Scripture, dearly held by millions through the ages, is being vindicated more and more in our day.

The Science of Origins, led by such persons as Dr. Stephen Hawking, is now making the first verses of Genesis look more plausible to the whole scientific community. A mere few years ago such a merging of scientific and Biblical thought would have seemed never-to-be. †

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Problems With Evolution

Gary C. Hampton



Ridiculous chart?

Is it any more far-fetched in concept than the idea that every type of life developed from a first single cell that somehow began to live and reproduce itself?

Microevolution, or *small* changes, has, in recent years, been observed on a molecular level. Examples of this would be bacteria which grow resistant to antibiotics, and the almost constantly changing AIDS virus. However, convincing evidence of **macroevolution**, or *large* changes, has so far proven elusive. "It is the astonishing complexity of subcellular organic structures that has forced the question, 'How could all this have evolved?'" (Michael J. Behe, **Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Change To Evolution**, page 15).

Niles Eldredge, a paleontologist, is quoted by Behe as saying, "Evolution cannot forever be going on somewhere else. Yet that's how the fossil record has struck many a forlorn paleontologist looking to learn something about evolution" (p. 27).

An example of this is found in what has been called the "Cambrian explosion". In rocks which have been thought to be about 600 million years old, it seems there are only a very small number of multi-cellular creatures. Yet, rocks which have been deemed only slightly younger have a "profusion of fossilized animals, with a host of widely differing body plans". Stephen Jay Gould "has argued that the rapid rate of appearance of new life forms demands a mechanism other than natural selection for its explanation" (Behe, pp. 27,28).

The difficulties are further highlighted in Behe's quotation from John McDonald, a University of Georgia geneticist, which appears on the same page. He said that genetic research over the last 20 years has yielded, "a great Darwinian paradox.

EVIDENCES

Those (genes) that seemingly do constitute the foundation of many, if not most, major adaptive changes apparently are not variable within natural populations” (emphasis in original). In fact, Jerry Coyne, of the University of Chicago Department of Ecology and Evolution, actually reached the conclusion “that there is little evidence for the neo-Darwinian view: its theoretical foundations and the experimental evidence supporting it are weak” (as quoted by Behe, p. 29).

The most damaging evidence against Darwin’s theory has always been found in the field of mathematics. Simply put, the numbers just do not add up. “Information

theorist Hubert Yockey argues that the information needed to begin life could not have developed by chance; he suggests that life be considered a given, like matter or energy” (Behe, p 29).

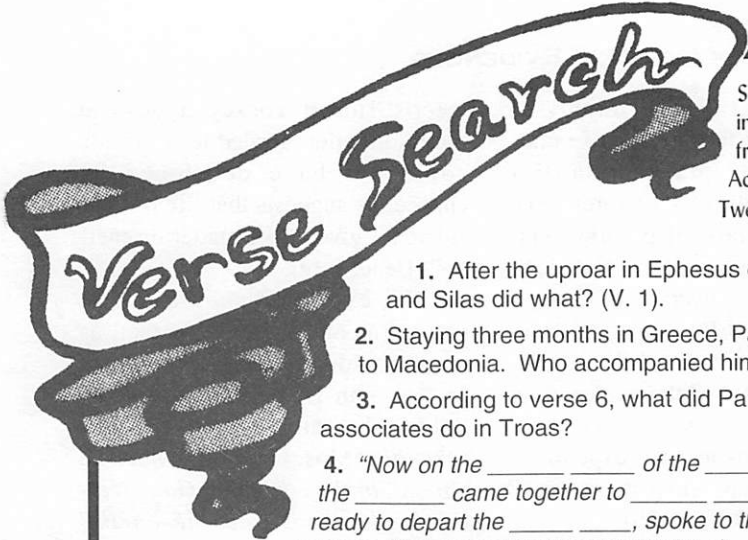
So, evolution should not be viewed as an indisputable fact, as some would have us believe. It is a *theory with flawed foundations!* Seldom has any theory been *less scientific*. Moses was right when he wrote, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). †

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Scientific Facts in the Bible

Principle	Discovered	Bible Location
1. A place void of stars in the North.	19th cent.	Job 26:7
2. Earth held by invisible forces.	1650	Job 26:7
3. The earth is round.	15th cent.	Isaiah 40:22
4. Day and night at the same time.	15th cent.	Luke 17:30-35
5. Early diagnosis of leprosy.	17th cent.	Leviticus 13
6. Quarantine for disease control.	17th cent.	Leviticus 13:1-46
7. Blood of animals carries diseases.	17th cent.	Leviticus 17:13,14
8. Oceans have natural paths in them.	1854	Psalms 8:8
9. Ship design in ratio of 30:5:3.	1860	Genesis 6
10. Stars give off signals.	1945	Job 38:7
11. Oceans have fresh water springs.	1920	Job 38:16
12. Infinite number of stars.	1940	Genesis 15:5
13. Air has weight.	16th cent.	Job 28:25
14. Arcturus and other stars travel.	19th cent.	Job 38:32
15. There is a water cycle.	17th cent.	Ecclesiastes 1:7
16. Man was the last “animal” created.	15th cent.	Genesis 1

From a chart by John Clayton

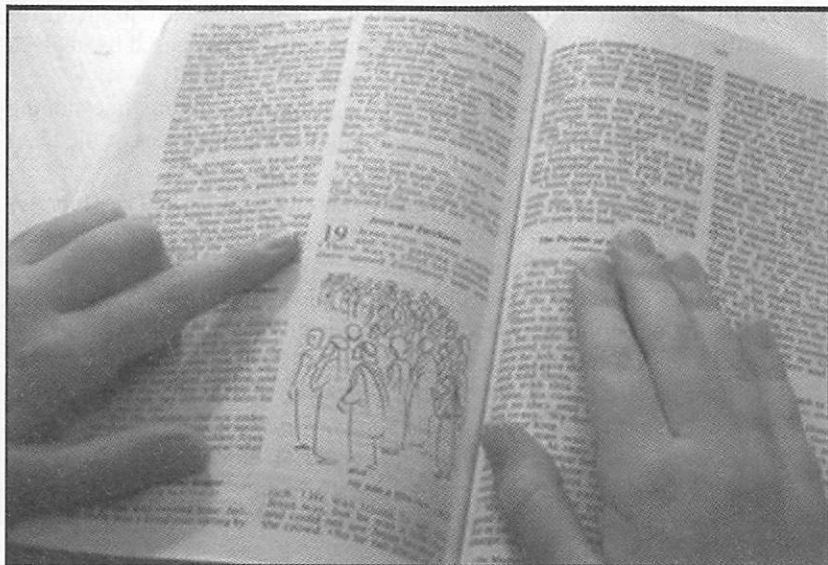


Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the book of Acts, chapter Twenty, NKJV.

1. After the uproar in Ephesus ended, Paul and Silas did what? (V. 1).
2. Staying three months in Greece, Paul returned to Macedonia. Who accompanied him? (Vs. 2-4).
3. According to verse 6, what did Paul and his associates do in Troas?
4. "Now on the _____ of the _____, when the _____ came together to _____, Paul, ready to depart the _____, spoke to them and continued his speech until midnight" (V. 7).
5. What happened to Eutychus? (V. 9).
6. After restoring Eutychus' life, what did Paul do? (Vs. 10,11).
7. When did he go on his journey? (Vs. 7,11).
8. What does this 7-day stay-over and early morning departure tell us?
9. Why did Paul by-pass Ephesus? (V. 16).
10. Who came to meet Paul at Miletus? (V. 17).
11. What did Paul remind them he had done? (Vs. 19,20).
12. To the Jews and also to the Greeks, what did Paul testify? (V. 21).
13. *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the _____, among which the _____ has made you _____, to shepherd the _____ of _____ which He _____ with His own _____*" (V. 28).
14. Paul warned them, "For I know this, that _____, savage _____ will come in among you, not _____ the _____. Also from among _____ men will rise up, speaking _____ things, to draw away the _____ after them" (Vs. 29,30).
15. What did Paul and his companions do after he had finished speaking with the elders of the Ephesus church? (V. 36).
16. Why did the disciples weep? (V. 37).

[See inside of back cover for answers.]



Five Sobering Warnings

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

The book of Hebrews stresses the superiority of Christ. Jewish Christians had been brought the message of Christ by the apostles and prophets (Hebrews 2:3,4). They had not matured in the faith, and consequently, they lacked confidence. They were on the fringes, in danger of returning to the patterns of Judaism. They were tempted to hang on to the old temple ritual and its worship.

God wanted them to understand that they no longer needed the old temple. The system was shaking and was about to be destroyed. They were a part of the new, unshakable kingdom. They didn't need the old priesthood or the sacrifices — they had a better covenant, a better priesthood, and a better sacrifice.

Whenever a Christian departs from Christ, he always goes to the inferior. *It does not get better than Christ.* In view of that truth, the writer of Hebrews gives five sobering warnings that Christians of all ages need to heed.

THE WORD OF GOD

1. **Don't DRIFT from the Word** (Hebrews 2:1-4). It's easy to just drift! Drifting is gradual! Drifting is dangerous! Drifting is caused by neglect. The cure to drifting is to pay *close attention*. Be spiritually alert!
2. **Don't DOUBT the Word** (Hebrews 3:12,13). A doubting, questioning heart turns from the living God. Doubting leads to hardness of the heart and finally to outright *unbelief*.
3. **Don't be DULL toward the Word** (Hebrews 5:11-14). The Hebrews were "slow to learn". They could not bear solid food. Their dullness had resulted in spiritual sluggishness.
4. **Don't DESPISE the Word of God** (Hebrews 10:26-39). A deliberate, presumptuous attitude reflects a willful despite toward God.
5. **Don't DEFY the Word of God** (Hebrews 12:14-25). One may get to the point where he actually refuses Him who speaks. Hebrews opens with a declaration that "*God has spoken*" and ends with a warning, "*see that you do not refuse him who speaks*" (Hebrews 1:1; 12:25).

There is a progression involved in these warnings:

If you don't *hear* the Word
you will **drift** from it.

When you *drift* from it,

you'll **doubt** it; for faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).

When hearts are *hardened* **sluggishness** results;

sluggishness produces **dullness** toward the Word.

When we become **dull**

a **despiteful spirit** results,

and a **despiteful spirit** will lead us to a **willful defiance** of the Word of God.

Why is it so vital that we store up God's word, reverentially, in our hearts? Because, as He Himself said in Hebrews 1:1,2, "*God who at various times and in different 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.*" If it is our desire to hear God, then we must hear Him through the words of His Son, as revealed in the New Testament.

In Hebrews, we are warned of grave dangers. Let us not allow these possibilities to happen to us. Keep an open, tender, receptive, and believing heart toward the Word of God. †

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God Has A Pattern

Jerry L. Davidson

The Bible has been given as man's pattern so that he may know how to relate to God without confusion or equivocation, "*for God is not the author of confusion*" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

A seamstress makes a dress according to the pattern. A contractor builds a house according to the blueprint. An artist paints a portrait according to the subject before him. It is no less important in the spiritual realm to follow God's pattern for our lives. His pattern is shown in several respects.

The Tabernacle

The descriptions of the Old Testament tabernacle are found in Exodus chapters 25-31 and 35-40. God instructed Moses to construct the tabernacle and provide its furnishings according to "the pattern" which He had given him (Exodus 24:8-10).

The writer of the book of Hebrews shows that the Levitical priesthood was to "*serve the copy and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain'*" (Hebrews 8:5). Just as God gave a pattern for the tabernacle, according to the Law of Moses, He has given us a pattern for service and worship according to the new covenant (see Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:1-7ff.). Thank God that He has given us a pattern for the cleansing of our sins (Titus 2:3-7), for Christian conduct (Titus 2:11-14), and for honoring Him (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26)!

The Bronze Serpent

According to Numbers 21:4-9, the Israelites sinned against God and Moses during their wanderings in the wilderness. Their sinful murmurings, and even idolatry, provoked God into sending fiery serpents among them, bringing death to many. The people cried out, confessing their sins and imploring the Lord to remove the serpents. God then instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it upon a pole. Those who had been bitten who looked at the bronze serpent lived.

Jesus used this Old Testament event to demonstrate the necessity of His death on the cross. He said, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him*

THE WORD OF GOD

should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15). His being "lifted up" included His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Men and women are poisoned by sin, but the remedy for sin is in looking upon Jesus who has been "lifted up" (see John 12:32,33; Hebrews 12:1,2).



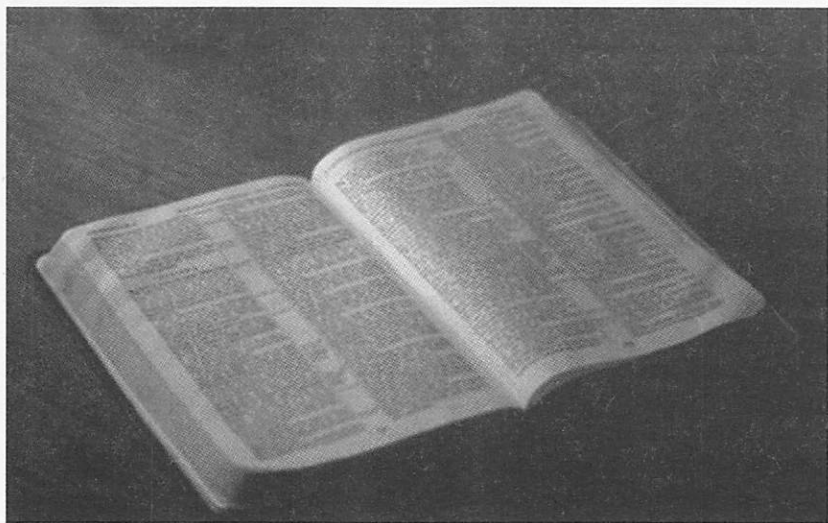
Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ

According to Romans 6:17,18, Paul shows that our salvation depends on our obedience to the "form" or "pattern" given in the Gospel. A proclamation of the Gospel must include the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Acceptance of the Gospel is obedience to the Gospel's pattern — the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Paul clearly shows in this chapter how such obedience takes place. Through faith in God, we die to our sins in repentance. In baptism we are plunged into Christ's death (verse 3), where His blood was shed. In baptism we are buried with Him (verse 4), even as Christ was buried. *"As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (verse 4). Therefore, it is through our faith leading us to repentance and then to burial in baptism that the "pattern" of doctrine is obeyed and freedom from sin is realized. Again, thank God that He has given us His pattern! †

Jerry L. Davidson teaches Bible at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, USA.

What Happens If We Change the Message?

Ron Bryant



The Christian faith is based upon the revealed will of God. The Scriptures, inspired of God, are not amenable — that means they cannot be **added to, subtracted from, or edited**. They are complete and furnish the believer completely (2 Timothy 3:16,17). They contain “*all that pertains to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3). They serve to bring to the heart of man the will of God, in order to bring the believer into a right relationship with God (Romans 1:16,17).

The Scriptures are full of warnings concerning the “*handling aright of the word of truth.*” The words are pointedly simple. There is the warning against “*going beyond what is written,*” against, “*going beyond the doctrine of Christ,*” against, “*adding to*” or “*taking away from*” the Word. The directive to “*preach the word*” is undergirded by the warning not to “*preach another gospel*” than that preached by the apostles (2 Timothy 4:2; Galatians 1:6-9).

THE WORD OF GOD

The whole of Christianity rests upon the inspired Word of God. No part of it is drawn from the doctrines of men.

The Gospel of Christ calls men to life in Christ. The terms of salvation are set forth in the doctrine of Christ (the Gospel of Christ). Salvation is to be found only through the doctrine of Christ. It cannot be found in the doctrines of men.

The worship and work of the people of God, as well as the moral and spiritual conduct that honors God, can be learned only from the doctrine of Christ. The Christian life is produced and maintained only in the acceptance of the will of God in Christ — the will of God, expressed in the Gospel. It cannot be produced by or maintained in the doctrines of men (Matthew 15:8,9; Mark 7:7-9; 2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9; Romans 6:16-18, 12:1,2).

An *amended* gospel, a *partial* gospel, or a *different* gospel, is *not* the Gospel of Christ. The doctrines of men are not the counsel of God.

And yet, there are folks who say with all candor that the word of God is not “law”, as such, but is merely a suggested pattern which can be changed with changes in culture. These men do not see anything wrong with re-writing, in essence, the Word of God, setting aside His confirmed Will, or going

beyond what is given in the New Covenant. They claim that they are vitally interested in the future of the church, the future of the youth, and that they want to see the church grow.

Yet, these brethren assume a very strange position: they conduct themselves as *authorities* who are *above the Word of God*, which they are perfectly willing to change, ignore, or set aside. They are ready for new terminology, new freedoms, new and different doctrines, broader fellowship, more exciting whatever. They are ready to embrace anything that will allow them greater personal choice in matters of faith and practice. With them, it is “the plan of salvation of your choice”, “the worship of your choice”, “the church of your choice”. With some who are a little more progressive, it is “the Jesus of your choice”, or “the godhead of your choice”. Their agenda is personal rather than Scriptural. They are ready to set aside the holy and are eager to offer in its place the profane.

But, who can re-write the will of God and still be loyal to God? I ask you, is there a greater or more urgent matter than the question of loyalty to God? Or has loyalty been negotiated down to nothing? †

Ron Bryant is the preacher for the church of Christ in Hollister, Missouri, USA.

Leave It As It Is!

Hollis Miller

In the truest sense of “fixed”, the Christian faith is a once-for-all-delivered faith (Jude 3). No rational person would dare deface an inscription on an ancient artifact, for to alter it would destroy it. In like manner, the religion taught by Jesus and His apostles is not subject to “polishing” by later generations.

Though old, and considered by some to be hopelessly out of touch with modern times, the great doctrines of Christianity were born to survive till human history ceases (see Matthew 28:20). Being true when they were first proclaimed, they will remain true forever. The time can never come when Jesus can be rightly viewed as not having been born of a virgin; as not performing miracles; as not literally (bodily) coming forth from His tomb on the third day. Changing these and other such foundational doctrines of the Christian faith would render the faith empty of enduring content. Paul wrote: “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

The morals of Christianity are as enduring as are the foundational doctrines on which they are estab-

lished. They are truths rather than merely arbitrary laws, and truth does not change. Drunkenness, thievery, murder, lying, homosexuality, slander, and covetousness are as evil and offensive to God today as they ever were. Neither time nor changing attitudes toward immoral behavior can ever turn moral wrong into moral right. It is surely an offense against the holiness and wisdom of God for any religious group to “vote” immoral behavior into acceptance.

True faith in Jesus Christ is always submissive to His rule and guidance. During His earthly ministry He asked: “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). This question must always live among Jesus’ disciples. When Jesus was on earth, He attributed refusal to accept Him to such forces as tradition, spiritual deafness and blindness, hardness of heart, and love of darkness (sin) rather than light (righteousness). All of these forces are still at work among men.

What shall we do with the Christian faith? Leave it as it is! †

Hollis Miller is a gospel preacher living in Murray, Kentucky, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Have you ever wondered why so many people all over the world get their babies “baptized” (actually *sprinkled*, because the word baptism, *baptizo*, in Greek, means to immerse or bury, as we read from Romans 6:3,4 and Colossians 2:12 in the Bible)?

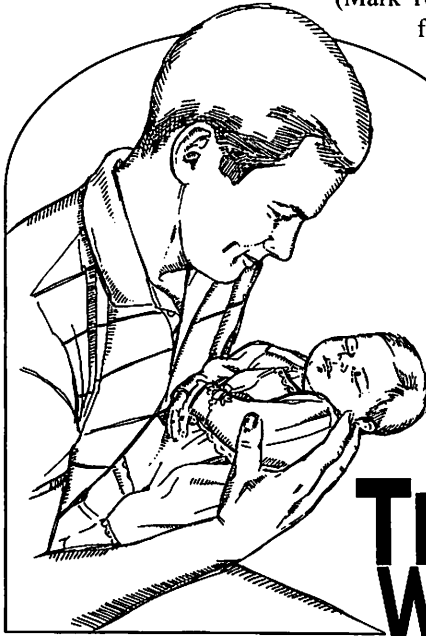
In the first place, as we have seen, they do not really have their babies baptized, but sprinkled. Secondly, they get them “baptized” for the wrong reason. For so many years people have been taught that their babies must be baptized, because if any of them dies without baptism then that child will go to hell.

Yes, the Bible teaches that one must be baptized to be saved from sins (Mark 16:16). We must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

Baptism is necessary to wash away one’s sins (Acts 22:16).

But the fact of the matter is that a baby or child is not a sinner, and therefore that baby or child does not need baptism!

Notice, if you will, what Christ said about little children. In Matthew 18, when the disciples were disputing together about who from among them would be



THE SOUL WHO SINS SHALL DIE!

Sunny David

greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of His disciples, and said to them: *“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will by no*

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

means enter the kingdom of heaven." Again, in a certain place when little children were being brought to Him so that He might put His hands on them and pray, His disciples rebuked those who were bringing the children. But Jesus said to them, "*Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 19:14). Now, if those children were lost sinners, as some suppose today, then why did Christ say, "*of such is the kingdom of heaven*"? And why would not His disciples have been fully aware that those children needed to be brought to Jesus in order that they might be saved from their sins? The very fact that they would have shooed the children away is evidence that they had no concept of little ones being lost and needing a Savior.

The truth of the matter is that babies, little children, have no sin in them. They are pure as Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, when God created them, after His own likeness and in His own image. (Genesis 1:26,27).

Adam and Eve were not created by God as little babies, but as a full-grown man and woman. They were intelligent, rational, were able to differentiate between wrong and right, were able to choose to do or not to do a certain thing. They chose to disobey God's command,

and therefore they became sinners when they disobeyed (Genesis 2:16,17; 3:1-13).

Likewise, when a baby is born, that baby is without any sin. He does not have the capability to understand right from wrong or the full consequences of disobedience. True, at an early age a child can begin to understand obedience to **parental commands**, but the **concept of God and of obedience to Him, and the laws concerning sin and its consequences are beyond the mental capabilities of a little child**. However, when the baby grows and become of a mature age — when he/she is able to know right from wrong; is able to make personal decisions; is able to choose to obey God or to disobey Him; when he/she is accountable to God — from that point onward, God holds that person responsible for every action he/she does.

Remember, Romans 3:23 says, "*All have sinned*," and not, "All are **born with sin**." Some do go to Psalm 51:5 to justify the erroneous belief that babies are **born sinners**. But this is not what is being taught in that passage. Notice, what David said, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity*." David was *brought forth*. But who had brought him forth? His *mother*! So he was talking there about *his mother who was in iniquity* when she had brought

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him forth. Again, notice, next he says, "And in sin my mother conceived me." Who had conceived David? **His mother!** Who was in sin? **His mother!** David was not yet even born! This statement is parallel to someone saying, "In anger my mother beat me." Who was angry? The mother, not the child!

Ezekiel, the prophet, was not wrong when he penned these words

in Ezekiel 18:20: "*The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*" †

Sunny David preaches the gospel in New Delhi, India.

PLEASE, DADDY, LET'S GO

A little girl with shining eyes, her upturned face aglow,
Said, "Daddy, it's almost time for Sunday School, you know;
Let's go and hear of Jesus' love, of how He died for all,
To take them to His home above, who on His name will call."

"Oh no," said Daddy, "I must have one day of rest,
and fishing's fine they say.

So run along, don't bother me. We'll go ANOTHER day."

Years have passed, and Daddy hears that plea no more —
"Let's go to Sunday School. . . ." Those childish days are o'er.
And now that Daddy's growing old, and life is almost through,
He finds some time for worship now,

BUT, what does daughter do?

She says, "Oh, Daddy, not today, I was out most all the night;
I've got to get a little sleep; — besides, I look a fright."

Then Daddy lifts a trembling hand to brush away the tears;
Again he hears that pleading voice, distinctly through the years,
He sees a small girl's upturned face; upturned with eyes aglow;
Saying, "It's time for Sunday School,
Please, Daddy, won't you go?"

— Author Unknown

Ishmael and His Descendants

Bill Nicks

After Hagar went in to Abraham and was with child, stormy relations gathered between her and Sarai. Hagar was cast out, but an angel of the Lord said to her: *"I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude...Behold, thou art with child, and shall bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren"* (Genesis 16:10-12). Some, reading this scripture, would conclude that Ishmael was **predestined** by God to be what he became, but **God has allowed all men of all time the freedom of choice**. This was not a **statement of predestination** but a **statement of prophecy**, as **God in His ability to see all things looked down through time and described what Ishmael and his descendants would choose to do**.

The descendants of Ishmael are the Arabs and the Turks. One of his descendants was Muhammad, who claimed to receive visions from God and to be God's prophet. The religion of Islam with its holy book, the Koran, came from Mohammed in about 622 A.D. There are millions of Moslems today, and they are a fast-growing religion in many parts of the world. What can we learn from the above Scripture about the descendants of Ishmael?

No doubt many Moslems are peaceful and make good neighbors. However, many of them are sinful and prefer sin. Their punishment is described as: *"Every man's hand is against him."* Any one who **chooses** violence and pillage instead of peace can expect no less than to be punished. Those among the Moslems who have killed thousands will continue to be sought out and punished because they are taking it upon themselves to be judges as to who will live; and because of this, they murder the innocent. Hitler was destroyed because he engaged the world in a war that was not a "holy war". There is nothing holy

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about war. Peace is holy because it comes from the "Prince of peace". Christians were prophesied as a people who would *"beat their swords into plowshares; and their spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Isaiah 2:4).

Moslems may be granted freedom of religion, yet they have an opportunity to learn of the Prince of peace, and to turn to Him for salvation. Those of us who are Christians have an opportunity, on the other hand, to live as examples before all men in love, and to try to lead them to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. God did not **predestine** the descendants of Ishmael to live in continual violence with *"his hand against every man."* **What He did pre-determine was that those who live in violence will fall, not because of the one from whom they descended, but because God has promised to "render to every man according to his deeds"** (Romans 2:6). And those who *choose* to terrorize the helpless and the weak, even in the name of religion, will not escape punishment from the civilized world.

God has made judgments and laws that are fair, promising to those who *"by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile"* (Romans 2:8-10).

Our God is no respecter of persons. He rewards those who live according to His standard and punishes those who choose to do evil. In Christ, we are *"predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will"* (Ephesians 1:11). We are told in Romans 8:28,29: *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* What did God **predestine**? That those who **love Him** and thus respond to the call of the gospel **will be conformed to the image of His son**. Or, in other words, that all who become God's children must become *like* His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace.

God's will for all of mankind is expressed by Christ in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16f). †

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Calvary

From the portals of glory two millenia ago
Descended God's Son
to a world of woe;

Conceived in perfection
and love divine,

God, clothed in flesh,
man's hope for all time;
Perfect in heart,

His life free of sin,

He was born for the cross,
man's soul to win;

In lamb-like submission,

He stood before man,

His face marred with spittle,

His back bowed in pain;

Love drove Him on

through the streets of the city,

To pay with His blood

for man's iniquity;

He was nailed to the cross

and placed between thieves,

Man's soul to save,

God's wrath to appease;

Even the sun

in shame fled the sight —

The Son of God dying

on Golgotha's height;

On Sunday's morn He arose from the dead,
And now reigns with the Father, having died
in our stead;

Calvary is God's portrait of grace, love and mercy,
His promise of freedom from Satan's adversity.

— Frank Chesser

Hope in the Seed

Roger E. Dickson



When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he died spiritually, for his sin separated him from God (Romans 5:12). He was also separated from the tree of life, and thus, took all humanity with him. All of us now suffer the consequences of his sin in that we all must physically die (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

In the midst of this human tragedy, however, God made a promise that a solution for sin would come (Genesis 3:15). Throughout the Old Testament there are hundreds of prophecies that foretold the com-

ing of the Messiah who would make atonement for the sins of men. All of these prophecies were concerning Jesus, who would die on the cross in order to reconcile us to God. He also came to give us a way to conquer that which all of us fear: physical death (Hebrews 2:14).

God chose a man by the name of Abraham through whom He would bring into the world the One who would be the Savior of mankind. God promised Abraham, *"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis

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12:3). From the time this promise was made around 2000 B.C., God continually reminded His people that there was a “blessing” coming who would bear the iniquities of the people (Isaiah 53). The promise was not only to the descendants of Abraham, the Jews, but to all families of the earth. It was God’s promise to humanity.

The Seed!

So, who was the blessing? Peter stated, *“You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed!’ To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities”* (Acts 3:25,26).

Who is the “Seed of Abraham”?

The Seed of Abraham that would bless all mankind was Jesus. Paul wrote, *“Now to Abraham and His Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as to many, but as to one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ”* (Galatians 3:16). So the Seed was Jesus Christ. This was the Seed of woman Whom God promised after Adam sinned, the One who would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15).

The Blessing!

Now, what was *the blessing* of Abraham that would come from the Seed? The Bible answers, *“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed’”* (Genesis 13:8). The Gospel in this promise has reference to good news that would be preached to all the world!

What is the “Blessing of Abraham”?

The Gospel was the good news of the Seed who would take care of our sin problem in our relationship with God. He would bring us to justification by faith (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16). He would thus reconcile us to God by His blood (Romans 5:10,11). This is how Jesus blesses all those who believe in Him and obey the commands of the Gospel. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). †

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Seeking the Kingdom

Ancil Jenkins

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

The casual Bible reader will probably find the "kingdom" a confusing subject to study. The word is used over 140 times in the New Testament, the majority of these in the Gospel accounts. In some cases, the kingdom and its blessings seem to be in the future, while in others it is a present reality (Matthew 3:1,2; Mark 1:14,15; Colossians 1:13). At times Jesus Himself seems to embody the kingdom (Luke 11:20; 17:20,21). In other places the church and kingdom are used synonymously (Matthew 16:18,19).

Despite a danger in oversimplification, there are some simple and perhaps adequate guidelines to enable us to understand the subject of the kingdom.

- ◆ The "kingdom of God" (or of "heaven") often refers to *the rule of God in our world or in the hearts of men.*
- ◆ The earthly representation of this rule is *the church.* At time's end, those who have submitted to God on earth and who are part of His church will be delivered up to the Father to share in that eternal spiritual kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Despite the enormity of the study, there are some simple aspects of the kingdom that should humble and challenge us.

- ◆ As Christians we are citizens of God's kingdom. Yet, we also live in a *world kingdom* that often conflicts with the aims, ideals, and goals of God's kingdom. In such cases, our loyalty is tested, and we must choose if we will continue to submit to the Heavenly King.
- ◆ We must consider the cost and pay the price of entering the kingdom: Jesus answered, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). Entrance into and membership in God's kingdom is limited to those who have experienced the *new birth of baptism into God's family.* Baptism is the expression of our faith which indicates submission to God and willingness for Him to be our king. Without this expression, there can be no subjection to Him. Thus, there is no question as to *when* one becomes a kingdom subject.
- ◆ **The price of entering the kingdom is high.** It calls for a sacrifice of anything that hinders our entering, no matter how precious it may be. *"And*

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if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire” (Mark 9:47).

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45). Such sacrifice is impossible without a mind that embodies **the submission to the King**. “Assuredly, I say to you unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).*

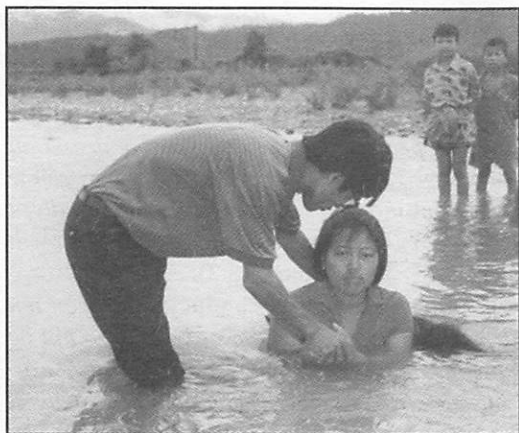
◆ Such a change of mind will bring a **change of conduct**. *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).*

What does membership in the kingdom mean to us? It means we should prize it greatly. Membership in the kingdom is costly; it calls for **the total surrender of ourselves, our thoughts, and our possessions**. Do not shrink from such surrender, since the cost is not high **compared to the benefits and alternatives**. †

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In our eagerness to have everyone be a part of the glorious kingdom of God, there is the continual temptation *to open the gates wider, to lower the standard for admittance, to herd people in, even without their full awareness*. Some would caution, “Don’t try to teach too much! You’ll turn people away! Many of those “harder”, more difficult lessons can be taught *after* people have become members of the church...”

But God is not in the business of lowering His standards, of eagerly running after people and being willing to accept *anything*, just so long as He can claim us for His own. Though God gladly accepted the Prodigal Son when he came home, He waited for *him* to change his heart and return (Luke 15:11). Jesus allowed the Rich Young Ruler to go away in sorrow, even though He loved him (Luke 18:18). In the judgment when many will, evidently sincerely, say they have served Him zealously, but He says He will turn them away, **because he never knew them** (Matthew 7:21-23). We must beware of the temptation to “play” God and to “promise” lowered standards of discipleship that He has never authorized in His word. *He alone is God!* — BBC



Jesus said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mark 16:16, NKJV). **Belief, baptism and salvation** are mentioned in this verse. But is there any significant *order* in the statement? Does it make any difference to Christ what order was followed in meeting the conditions of pardon? Can one be **baptized** and be

Baptism in the Right Order

E. Claude Gardner

saved, and then **believe**? Or can one *believe* and be *saved* and then be *baptized*? Or can one be **saved** and later **believe** and be **baptized**? Or must one both *believe* and be *baptized* before he can be *saved*? Does the order of the words, or the order of obedience to them, have any significance at all when it comes to God granting salvation?

It is understood that the proper order is important in matters of business. If one is a merchant and sends a bill to a customer for \$91.92, but then he receives a check for payment in the amount of \$19.29, certainly he would object. But perhaps the customer will affirm that he has the proper numbers on the bill; they have simply been rearranged. Is the matter settled?

Obviously, the right order makes a difference in the bill payment, and so does the order of one's obedience to God. One may reason that if the person has met both conditions laid down by Christ, he has, in fact, obeyed God even though what he did was not in the order Jesus gave.

It is a popular religious belief that one can “accept Jesus” by only “believing” in Him as Savior. The believer, therefore, has been saved from his sin, even though he has not yet been baptized. He is taught that *after* his faith has resulted in his salvation, he is *then* baptized as “an outward testimony of an inward grace” — in other words, he is baptized *because he has been saved* [looking backward to the event], *not in order to be saved* [look-

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ing forward to the event]. Let us examine whether the order of obedience *toward salvation* makes any difference to Jesus.

Why is it right to follow the order Christ gave: 1. Belief; 2. Baptism; 3. Salvation? Because He requires **both** *belief* in Him and the new *birth* of baptism **before** one becomes a Christian — both are essential to salvation. Before being baptized, one must believe in Jesus, for the simple reason that “baptism” is only the wetting of the body unless it is motivated by “belief”. In the same way, one does not actually “believe” in Christ unless he is willing to do whatever Jesus has asked, and unless he believes what Jesus said about the results of his actions: one *believes*, and as a result he is *baptized* because he believes that Jesus will *then save* him, as He promised. It’s very simple logic.

Baptism *always* is a requirement to be saved. One must do it *in the way* the Lord says do it and *for the Bible purpose*.

One may be baptized *in order to be inducted into a denomination* or religious body unknown in the Bible. No denominations existed in the beginning of the church (A.D. 33), and therefore to be baptized to become a member of a denomination is not what the Bible teaches.

What is the scriptural way to be baptized?

✕ Baptism is a **burial in water**. If you read each conversion recorded in the New Testament, you will see that in every case the penitent believers were baptized. Neither sprinkling of water nor pouring of water on the head was ever used as baptism. Rather, baptism was a burial in water, depicting the burial of Christ, as recorded in Romans 6:3,4, and Acts 8:36-38.

✕ According to the New Testament, when one is baptized (immersed), it is “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). He or she becomes a saved person who is automatically **added** (not subject to *joining the church of your choice*) **to the church for which Jesus gave His blood**. It is the one church that is presented in the Bible. The Word of God attests to this truth. “*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*” (Acts 2:41,47). “*...on this rock I will build My church and the gates of hades will not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). If one has not been baptized into the Lord’s church, being saved in the process, how can one know that he or she is in Christ’s body? The decision cannot be determined by the way an individual feels, or by generations of traditions.

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✕ Being baptized requires **proper motive and purpose**. To proceed with the act without being taught as to the reason makes the action invalid. To be immersed to please the preacher, or parents, or friends, or for business reasons, is worthless in the sight of God. A person must sincerely *“obey from the heart”* (Romans 6:17).

In every Bible passage, when both salvation and baptism are discussed in the same verses, it is taught that being saved always comes *after* baptism and not *before*. Consider the following and observe that the order is *first* baptism and *then* salvation. The order must be significant for Bible writers to make it so clear.

Compare your salvation with these passages of Scripture:

“Then Peter said to them. Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Act 8:12).

“...and immediately he and his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household” (Acts 16:33,34).

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

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

Several other verses teach the same order: Acts 8:36-39; Colossians 2:12; and 1 Peter 3:21.

The only right order for carrying out the commands of Christ is to follow the teaching of the New Testament. One may have thought that salvation was given **on the point of belief only** and then one could be **baptized later**, but the Bible teaches that the purpose of baptism is *“for the remission of sins.”* Those who have followed the doctrines of men need to be properly baptized according to the Bible plan. One can be misled regarding becoming a Christian. Solomon warns, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). †

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Our Lord Prayed for Unity

Albert Gardner

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:30,31).

Just before going to the cross, our blessed Lord prayed that all who believed in Him should be united. When one considers conditions today, he sees a world torn with people fighting each other, often in the same church. This is anything but the answer to the prayer of Christ.

One man who keeps up with current conditions says that in the USA alone, there are 1,586 churches. This counts the break-offs and splinter groups. World wide, there are about 5,000. No wonder some turn away from Christianity in disgust and complete disinterest! Jesus said **unity will make believers**, so the opposite is also true: **division will make unbelievers!**

The church at Corinth was severely divided. They were divided into factions wearing the names of men. They were saying, *“I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”* Paul asks three questions that must be true in order for one to wear the name of another. *“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were*

you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:12,13).

Someone may ask, “What harm is there in wearing different names? Still, we’re all ‘Christians’.” The name we wear determines the status of our salvation. *“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). This reference is to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. There is enough in a name to cause division! There is enough in a name to cause damnation! And there is enough in His name to save us, if we obey Him!

The solution is spelled out for us. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Corinthians 1:10). Does that sound like division should be taken lightly? †

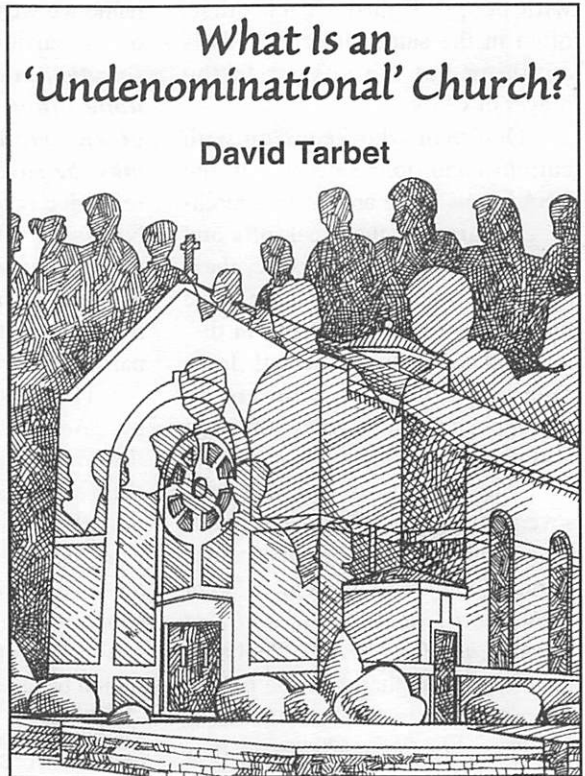
Albert Gardner is the preacher for the church of Christ in Strawberry, Arkansas, USA.

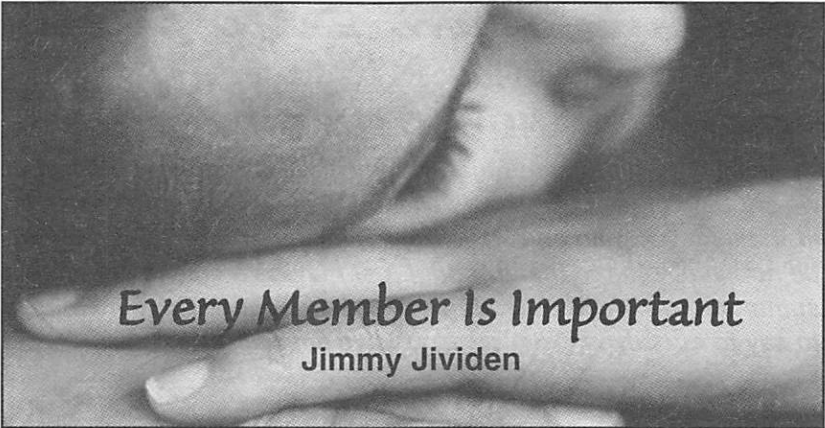
THE CHURCH

When Jesus built His church upon the foundational rock that He is the Son of God (Matthew 16:18) it was an “undenominational” fellowship. Here are some characteristics of that church, which, if we will imitate them, will help us be “undenominational” Christians today:

1. **Christ’s church accepted the New Testament as final authority.** *“All Scripture is...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3:16). Man-made traditions only divide believers and have no place in the Lord’s plan.
2. **Christ’s church opposed every practice and doctrine not found in the Word of God.** Beware of those who teach *“strange and diverse teachings”* (Hebrews 13:9).
3. **Christ’s church worshiped according to the New Testament pattern.** *“Follow the pattern of the sound words...”* (2 Timothy 1:13,14).
4. **Christ’s church required nothing for church membership other than what God Himself required.** When we repent and are baptized, God adds us to His church (Acts 2:38-47). There should be no other requirements for church membership! God sees to it that the saved are added to His church the moment their sins are forgiven. Anything more than this is a denominational requirement. †

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Every Member Is Important

Jimmy Jividen

Some of the Christians at Corinth had a poor self image. They were “ungifted” and felt inferior to those who possessed the showy miraculous gifts of speaking in foreign languages. They felt “left out” in the church and “unimportant”.

Paul used an analogy to deal with this problem. The church, he said, is the body of Christ. Every Christian is a member of this spiritual body, just as the arm and leg are members of our physical body. They are connected and interdependent. The poor self-perception of the “ungifted” is reflected in the text. *“Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body...because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body”* (1 Corinthians 12:15).

Paul affirmed that every member of the body is important. Every Christian has a place and is needed. To prove this, he asked three rhetor-

ical questions: *“If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?...And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”* (1 Corinthians 12:17,19).

Every member was important at Corinth. It is the same today. Those members who perform “unglamorous” jobs are necessary. Those with physical and mental abilities are important. Paul said, *“The members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary”* (1 Corinthians 12:22).

Instead of being envious or feeling inferior because of our own limitations, we should rejoice that we are all a part of the body of Christ. Our concern should be to **do what we can with what we have where we are.** †

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Waiting Room Bible Study

A HANDY LITTLE CHART

"It is easy to get discouraged when things are going badly. But we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, next time your little hut is burning to the ground it just may be a smoke signal that summons the grace of God. For all the negative things we have to say to ourselves, God has a positive answer for it:

YOU SAY	GOD SAYS	BIBLE VERSES
"It's impossible"	All things are possible	(Luke 18:27)
"I'm too tired"	I will give you rest.....	(Matthew 11:28-30)
"Nobody really loves me"	I love you.....	(John 3:16 & John 3:34)
"I can't go on"	My grace is sufficient.....	(II Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91:15)
"I can't figure things out"....	I will direct your steps..	(Proverbs 3:5-6)
"I can't do it"	You can do all things.....	(Philippians 4:13)
"I'm not able"	I am able.....	(II Corinthians 9:8)
"It's not worth it"	it will be worth it.....	(Roman 8:28)
"I can't forgive myself"	I Forgive you	(I John 1:9 & Romans 8:1)
"I can't manage".....	will supply all your needs.....	(Philippians 4:19)
"I'm afraid"....	I have not given you a spirit of fear....	(II Timothy 1:7)
"I'm always worried and frustrated"	Cast all your cares on ME.....	(I Peter 5:7)
"I don't have enough faith" ..	I've given everyone a measure of faith.....	(Romans 12:3)
"I'm not smart enough"	I give you wisdom....	(I Corinthians 1:30)
"I feel all alone"	I will never leave you or forsake you.....	(Hebrews 13:5)

**Believe God is there just for you...
YOU NEVER KNOW WHO MAY BE IN NEED**

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

David Deffenbaugh

No one, God included, likes dry, dull, emotionless worship. Sometimes we express our desire in this regard to be for “meaningful” worship. This is an outstanding goal. Even in the often turbulent realm of discussion and debate over worship, virtual consensus reigns on this point. The explosion (of divergent ideas, philosophies, approaches, and even tempers) comes when answering the question of *how* to make worship meaningful.

There is, of course, a large clamoring of voices calling for a course of action directed at adding *emotional punch* to the worship. What is it that connects and stirs people emotionally? Often, cues are taken from the entertainment world. This industry, by necessity, is quite savvy to what connects with people. The problem here, beyond the obvious superficiality, is that *the public's taste is constantly changing, is seldom satisfied for long, and usually falls into extremes!* What satisfied (and sold) yesterday will not do so tomorrow. Is true “meaning” really that fickle?

A better approach is to ask what it is about worship that gives meaning. Is it not the very being of God and His gracious act of providing sal-

vation from sin through Jesus Christ? Is not meaning heightened as our understanding and appreciation of God and all that He has done increases? And what's more, the depth of meaning is limitless, as we will never fully comprehend and appreciate — this side of eternity — God and all He has done. *“Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”* (Romans 11:33).

That being said, does it not also make sense for contemporary man to give expression in contemporary language to praising and extolling the greatness of God? Is there any reason for modern Christians to be bound *only* to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs penned *one, two, three, or four or more centuries ago*? Neither, though, is there any valid reason to abandon these beautiful and, — dare we say? — *meaningful*, expressions of faith from centuries gone by?

So, in pursuit of the “meaningful”, it appears that focusing on what gives true meaning would be the sensible thing, within the framework of Scripture. †

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PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

W. Douglass Harris

There are divergent views of what is the most paramount need of the church. There are many, and reverence in worship is one of the greatest. Some of the urgency of this need may be caused by our *lack of preparation* and *lack of teaching on how* to prepare. Nothing can be done well without preparation. Today's cultural impact of various religious groups destroys reverence by **noisy participation**. "*Be still, and know that I am God...*" (Psalm 46:10).

Genuine and sincere worship requires preparation. The principles of proper preparation are suggested by an Old Testament example. (Laws can and do change, but eternal principles do not change; see Romans 15:4). Our example is God's requirements of the children of Israel to meet Him at the base of Mount Sinai for the giving of the ten-commandment law (Exodus 19). (The reader would be well-advised to read that chapter thoughtfully before continuing further in this article.)

In preparing to meet God for this momentous occasion, Israel was instructed to:

1. Remember all that God had done for them in the past and what He would do for them in the future, if they obeyed and kept His covenant with them (verses 4-6). This review of God's care would prepare them to meet Him at the base of Sinai. Memory is a powerful factor. Remembering the greatness and holiness of God and His grace in saving us from the slavery of sin; remembering the sacrifice for our sins, and the promised blessings of faithful service to Him should be ample preparation for acceptable worship. The Lord's Supper is a memorial (remembrance), if observed discerningly (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).

2. Be ready for the third day when God descends on the mountain (verses 11, 15). The Israelites were to recognize that this was a holy and solemn occasion. They were to wash their garments (verse 10); they were to set bounds and limits on where they could go and what they could do (verses 12-15). They were to be forgiven first and sanctified for the awesomeness of being in the presence of God.

In contrast to the experience of the Israelites, the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 12, verses 18-29:

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“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: ‘And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.’ And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’)

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’”

In our worship assemblies of this age, God is always present in the special personal sense, as described in Hebrews 12. When we worship, we enter into His presence. And although the promise made by Christ in Matthew 18:20 was specifically to the apostles, He is still in the midst of any number assembled in His name and for the purpose of worship.

This — the *lack of preparation*, or being ready — may be the most critically deficient aspect of our worship today. **To obtain the fullest spiritual benefit from worship we must put something into it in the way of preparation.**

3. To reverence God because of His nature (verse 16ff; 20:5,6). Moses was reminded at the burning bush which was not consumed that *he was standing on holy ground* (Exodus 3:2-5). Joshua proclaimed to Israel, before they crossed the Jordan in conquest of the promised land, that Jehovah was a holy and jealous God (Joshua 24:19). Realizing that we are in the presence of the Almighty God in a special sense when assembled for worship should inspire great reverence for Him. *“Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:28,29 RSV). †

W. Douglass Harris, a retired Gospel preacher, lives in Macon, Georgia, USA.

What Were You Thinking?

Robert L. Moss

The inspired writer Luke stated that *"upon the first day of the week"* was the day the church assembled for worship (Acts 20:7). We are told by John that worship to God must be *"in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). The words *"in truth"* entail the meaning of doing something according to truth, as Scripture prescribes. The words *"in spirit"* involve the proper framework of mind necessary for acceptable worship.

This article is being written on Monday, the day following Sunday (the first day of the week, when Christians worship God). As you worshiped God yesterday, what were you thinking? What was it that occupied your mind as you were assembled together with the saints? In **the study of God's word**, were you concentrating on learning the truths under discussion? Was your attitude one of a sincere desire to learn and to obey whatever God's word says? Did you worship *"in spirit"*?

What were you thinking as **the beautiful songs of praise** were being lifted before the Father (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)? Acceptable worship would not only involve songs that are scriptural, but

also proper concern for what was being said in the words.

What were you thinking as **prayer was being offered** (Acts 2:42; 12:5)? There must be proper concern and thought as to the wording and intent of prayer. Even though another may be leading the prayer (a man), our part is not acceptable if our thinking is on things unrelated to the worship act at hand.

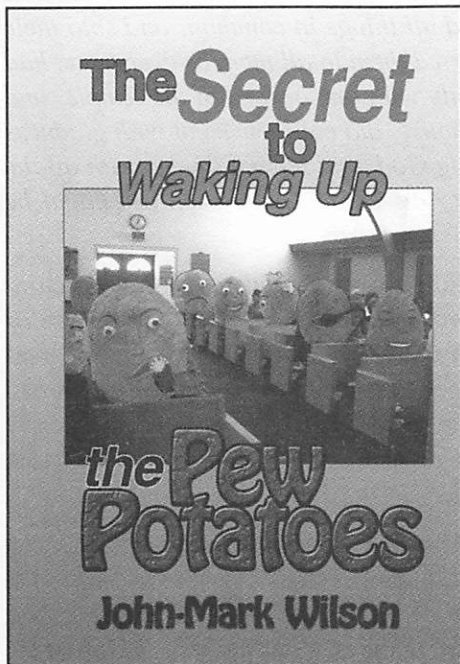
What were you thinking when **the contribution was being collected** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2)? Giving is to be done as God has prospered the individual, and with a cheerful heart. When you gave, were you thinking of the joy involved in being able to give back to God?

What were you thinking when **partaking of the Lord's Supper** (Acts 20:7)? This act of worship is a memorial to the Lord (Luke 22:19). We are to partake of it with proper remembrance of Him, else we condemn ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

True worship involves more than just going through the motions! †

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Evacuating the Padded Pew



***How to Develop
Your "Recapturing
the Vision"
Program!***

Part One: How to Recapture the Vision of Christ and the Early Church

Just after the establishment of the church, the new disciples were on fire for Christ! Many heard the first gospel message proclaimed by Peter and were moved to

make a major change in their life. Luke records this exciting new time in Acts 2:37,38 saying, *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."*

There was a multitude listening to those powerful words being presented on this great day, and we can read a little farther to see the effects in the lives of those obeying the Gospel. *"Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they contin-*

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ued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

This explosion of growth didn't just stop with its profound beginning. Scripture says, "*the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" Day after day the early church grew and, as persecutions became worse, these new Christians were scattered abroad (Acts 8:4). This great scattering only ignited the growth of the early church. They went everywhere preaching the word, as ultimately the world was turned upside-down!

One of the things we need to discuss is how congregations can recapture that lost vision. The preacher needs to stop saying, "I'll preach only on things containing meat, because all our members are Christians already." As visitors from the community come and sit in the assembly, they'll be choking on all that meat, without a drop of milk to wash it down! If you don't teach the non-Christian concerning the fundamentals of Christianity, you're never going to see much growth.

This information is focused on building up the numbers within the listening audience. The crowd should be full of people seeking Jesus! Months before the establishment of the Lord's church in A.D. 33, the Gospel accounts tell of the huge multitudes who followed Christ. The crowd consisted of all kinds of ground: people whose hearts were thorny, some whose hearts were stony, but also others who were truly looking for Christ and His coming kingdom or church. As Jesus would begin to speak, a crowd would often gather. "*And He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gath-*

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ered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land" (Mark 4:1). It was to this multitude that Jesus took opportunity to teach concerning the acceptance of the kingdom of God.

The message presented by Jesus was that of success in spreading the Gospel seed! After He created in their minds the image of four different types of listeners, he focused on the one that is called "the good ground". It is here that we find the great promise of success for this program. *"And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred"* (Mark 4:8). We want to focus on increasing the crowd so that we may find this good ground!

A question that may worry the Christian is, can we appeal to modern people and still remain Biblical? The needs, desires, and wants of people haven't changed over the centuries. People still need the comfort that security in Christ brings. Most people desire a level of success in their life, and through earthly means, they pursue their dreams and goals, only to fall short and feel as if something is missing. Christ fills the heart of the searching with hope that is unsurpassed by material things. As long as people exist, there will be a need to proclaim Christ to a lost and dying world!

Unfortunately, some today think the Bible is a dead letter, that it teaches things not applicable to the modern world with our fast-paced society. But, it's just as relevant today as in the day in which it was penned. Its Biblical principles can be applied to a person with a chariot, stone pot and word-of-mouth entertainment, as well as a person with a Cadillac, microwave and big-screen television!

There are hundreds of different approaches to reaching the lost for Christ. As long as these methods are founded on the Word of God and don't violate Biblical principles, they need to be implemented. The printed page will convert some, the radio will reach others, the television even others. We are simply given the message and told to "go". We aren't instructed on *how* to go. Therefore, we must use

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every means available to accomplish the task given to us earthen vessels, to take the word and “go”. *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:19,20).

Can we appeal to modern people and still remain Biblical? Absolutely! *“Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever!”* (Hebrews 13:8).

Pew Potato Power Points

The preacher needs to stop saying, “I’ll preach only on things containing meat, because all our members are Christians already.” As visitors from the community come and sit in the assembly, they’ll be choking on all that meat, without a drop of milk to wash it down!

Review Questions

1. Why build up the number of listeners?

2. What does a crowd consist of?

3. Can we appeal to the modern world and remain Biblical?

4. Is the ground mentioned in Mark 4:8 found in most crowds? _____
5. Are we told how to go and preach the Gospel?



(Chapter four of John-Mark Wilson’s study book and work-guide, **The Secret to Waking Up the Pew Potatoes.**)

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GROWING

J. Randal Matheny

“My concern is not to know whether I am great or small, but whether I am growing with each day that passes.”

— Eduardo Chillida

If you're one of those who likes to read the original, here's what the man said in Spanish: “Mi preocupación no es saber si soy grande o pequeño, sino comprobar si crezco cada día.”

Regardless of the language or country, such a sentiment is never more true than when applied to spiritual things. Peter says, “*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18, NASU).

And here's the big question: **What am I doing today with that concern to ensure that I am growing?**

Bible reading? Check. ✓

Prayer? Check. ✓

Teaching my neighbor about Jesus?

Teaching my neighbor about Jesus? Maybe I haven't gotten that far yet. ***I can read the Bible all I want, but it's just a swollen head of knowledge until I start sharing it with someone.***

Do this: start a Bible study group in your home, and invite all your neighbors. Bible study group sound ominous? Then start a Bible **READING** group. Read a chapter together. Preface it with some comments about the context. Intersperse a comment or two on a specially meaningful verse. Conclude with comments about what that means for our life. Finish with a prayer and a time of neighborly fellowship.

Just about anybody could do THAT, don't you think?

Grow in Christ's grace and knowledge by becoming a *dispenser* of grace and knowledge. Grace and knowledge go together. And when you take that explosive mixture outside of your own head to pass it forward, **growth will be yours!**

Try it. Start today.



Randal Matheny is a missionary working with churches of Christ in Brazil.

MEASURING A CHURCH'S FAITH

Bobby Dockery

Faith is indispensable in the lives of individual Christians (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is also the vital ingredient for church growth. The words "faith" and "belief" are used almost 500 times in the New Testament. No individual or congregation can ever be great without great faith!

The contemporary religious scene offers no shortage of church growth experts who tout a wide variety of leadership styles, management plans, and growth strategies for building bigger, better, more exciting churches. In the final analysis, however, real growth in any congregation will never rise above the level of faith of its membership and leadership!

How can you determine whether or not a church possesses genuine faith? **A Church with Faith Has Its Eye on the Future.** Faith causes a church to dream. A church with faith has *a plan, a vision for the future*. Too often we are ready to set limits — "We are big enough, are active enough, are well enough equipped, etc." But faith looks to the future. We must dream or we die! Our faith is just as big as our plan for the future!

A Church with Faith Has Its Feet on the Ground. Faith must be rooted in the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We are living in the age of religious gimmickry. All sorts of inducements are offered to lure people to worship. Some will justify anything which fills pews. Churches seek to sell excitement, entertainment, easy going informality, and minimal commitment. The only church growth which is real and enduring, however, is that which is based on God's Word. Gimmickry betrays a spiritual shallowness. It is an expression of a loss of confidence in the power of God's Word.

A Church with Faith Has Its Hands on the Plow. Jesus said: "*No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62).

A Church with Faith Is a Working Church. James says: "*But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works'; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works*"

(James 2:18). A church's faith is measured by the energetic **service**, *involvement*, and **sacrificial commitment** of its members. Faith finds a way! We must dream, but we must also work our dreams!

A Church With Faith Has Its Heart on God. We must never leave God out of the picture. Too often we talk of future plans and needed works as though God were not even involved. We conclude that some things are "impossible" or "out of the question" because we have eliminated God from the discussion. We make the mistake of trying to calculate the future of the church with an adding machine and a slide rule, without leaving room for God! We may plant and water, but it is God who gives the increase!

Genuine faith is highly visible — it can be seen! Our problem is that we try to build churches the wrong way around — we want the **results** of faith without the **rigors** of faith! But faith cannot be counterfeited or imitated. It must be real to produce real church growth! *"So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God..."* (Romans 10:17). †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

Who Is My Elder Brother?

My conscience tells me that I am a sinner. Yours tells you the same thing. In the Bible we read, *"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 4:23).

Man's struggle is to find a way to get rid of that feeling of guilt. Religions have asked all sorts of things in penance: animal sacrifices, money offerings, sacrifices of hair, food, flowers — even human life has sometimes been required as people have struggled for forgiveness.

The Bible teaches, though, that there is forgiveness only as we obey God by being born into His Family: *"...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). *"Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"* (Galatians 4:7). Through the new spiritual birth, one's sins are washed away; God becomes his spiritual Father, and Jesus Christ becomes his savior and elder brother. (Hebrews 2:11,14,17)

NEXT: Who Are My Brothers and Sisters?

Editor's Note:

We would like to continue with the account brother Grimm wrote concerning the existence of Christians in many places throughout the centuries following the establishment of the church in Jerusalem in AD 33. Because true Christians have always been in the minority, their history has often been ignored, even while many were dying martyrs' deaths as "heretics" at the hands of religious people. The story continues...



Persecution and Endurance

Dr. Hans Grimm

The bold proclamation of the happy message of the New Covenant had as a result not only **the rapid formation of churches** but also **a great tangle of false teachings** now appeared — not as the result of the propagation of the knowledge of the Bible by the itinerant preachers, as the Catholic historians wrote in

their polemic works, but as a result of that colossal ignorance about the real facts of salvation, ignorance in which an unscrupulous clique of priests had kept the souls that had been entrusted to them.

The persecution that now set in with full force naturally put into one pot those of opposing and differing views — half-crazy Manichean ascetics who saw the crowning of their life in fasting to death, and dissolute freethinkers who enjoyed at full draughts the joys of life (or at least what they considered as joys), hysterical and psychopathic souls, who pretended to be the reincarnation of Christ or Mary and who considered their confused hallucinations as the word of God speaking for them, and also strictly Bible-following surviving orthodox thinkers holding to the New Testament — all were designated with the collective name "Albigenses" (named after one of the centers of religious ferment in south France, Albi) and were made the goal of all measures of extermination.

CHURCH HISTORY

It was to no avail that princes and nobles of these regions at first strictly declined to persecute the true followers of the Lord. These were simple, sensible, industrious people who always fulfilled their obligations, who were respected everywhere on account of their unquestioning love of the truth, and who were pioneers in many trades (as for example, in the arts of stonemasonry and weaving). The nobles therefore saw in them a special treasure in their land which would be valuable to keep. Especially did the young Vicomte Roger Ramon Trencavel from the Visigothic peerage and the energetic Capitoul, Head Mayor of Toulouse, Pierre Mauran, interest themselves in protecting those threatened by the Inquisition.

But in spite of their energetic remonstrances, the storm broke loose in the year 1208 when a papal legate in a public sermon severely insulted the mighty Earl of Toulouse, a free thinker and by no means a religious man. Because of the insult, the papal spokesman was slain by a vassal of the earl. A crusade began under the king of France who long had greedily eyed the possessions of the rich, industrious Languedoc tradesmen. His forces marched into the district of the "heretics" and stormed one city after the other in fearful slaughter among Catholics, fanatics, and

Christians. In his long-lasting and furious campaigns of revenge during thirty years and more, he made of the land a wilderness almost uninhabited by man. The French historians estimate the number of those who perished through the direct effects of war in Languedoc from 1208 through 1244 at around 1,500,000. To this must be added also the number of those perishing from epidemics and famines following the campaigns and those who fell victims of the tribunals of the Inquisition.

The council of the Catholic bishops of 1229 at Toulouse issued regulations for the persecution of the heretics. Of these the following are the most important:

- ◆ every secular or ecclesiastical official who spares a heretic shall be stripped of his land, office, or possessions;
- ◆ every house in which a heretic is found shall be torn down;
- ◆ heretics and those suspected of heresy shall not be allowed the services of a physician, even in the severest illness;
- ◆ those implicated in this same crime even if criminals shall be accepted as witnesses against heretics;
- ◆ confessions may be forced through torture;
- ◆ even the suspicion of heresy justifies imprisonment;
- ◆ the penalties for heresy shade

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off from the loss of rights of citizenship and church to the seizure of property and imprisonment up to execution,

◆ execution varied from simple decapitation or drowning to slow strangulation by the garotte and finally to a quick death through powder-explosions or on the funeral pile.

Their missionary zeal led them to regions outside of France, where they still found intact small congregations of Christ.

Two-thirds of the confiscated property of the heretics fell to the ruling board of the Inquisition, while one-third was assigned to the informers. But in order that the state church (which still called itself Christian) should not have the appearance of thirsting after blood, the secular rulers were obligated to lend their arm to the ecclesiastical authorities by performing the service of executioner for them.

The French historian, Charles Molinier, rightly wrote in his report about the "Catharist" heretics of the 13th century, based on Catholic sources: "By no means can one give credence to the voices of the judges, who all too often were also the executioners."

Remnants of the old evangelical churches of Southern France were preserved in the foundation of "The Poor of Lyons", a foundation

established by the wealthy merchant Pierre Valdes of Lyons. They were named after its founder the "Waldenses" (cf. Valdes with Wald) and they united in a unique manner New Testament Christianity with the ideals of Catholic monks. Their missionary zeal soon led them to regions outside of France, where

they still found intact small congregations of Christ: in the Bernese Highlands, in the Jura Mountains and Vosges Mountains, as well as in the sections of the Lower Rhine and Friesland, yes, even in Brandenburg and Bohemia. That the memory of the old churches of Waldensian-type was still very much alive is shown by the report of the flaming death of Mrs. Lucardis in Trier in the year 1229, who thanked God for the funeral pile that she could suffer there where many years before a faithful confessor of the glory of Christ had given his life for his Savior. †

Excerpt from Tradition and History of the Early Churches of Christ in Central Europe by Dr. Hans Grimm, translated by Dr. H.L. Schug, and printed by Firm Foundation, P.O. Box 210876, Bedford, Texas, 76095-7876, USA.

Note: The Bibliography will be given at the conclusion of the series of articles. Editor.



How do you measure up?

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),
and raised us up together,
and made us sit together in the heavenly places
in Christ Jesus,
that in the ages to come He might show
the exceeding riches of His grace
in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and that not of yourselves;
it is the gift of God, not of works,
lest anyone should boast.
For we are His workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand
that we should walk in them
(Ephesians 2:4-10).

Turn the Spirit Loose!

Jack Harriman

Jesus said the Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Paul said Christians were to walk after, and thus be led by, the Spirit (Romans 8:1,14).

The Spirit's convicting, directing, and leading involves **a teacher**. The eunuch could not understand without **a teacher**. *"...Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him"* (Acts 8:31).

Paul taught Timothy **to teach** others **to teach** others. *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

If every home in the world possessed a Bible in their own language, it would not result in the

masses being convicted of sin and walking after the Spirit. Most people would still need **teachers**. The work of the Spirit is greatly limited without **a teacher**.

And *the quality of the teaching* affects the Spirit's work. Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue of the Jews and "so spoke" that a great multitude both of the Jews and Greeks believed (Acts 14:1). The quality of their teaching enabled the Spirit to work in a powerful way.

In 1827 Walter Scott began preaching among 16 churches in Ohio. The year before, these churches showed a net decline in membership. In 1828, under the influence of Scott's preaching, these churches doubled in membership and experienced explosive growth in the years that followed. He emphasized that a sinner must believe the Gospel, repent of past sins, and be baptized for the remission of sins. God then would forgive his sins, give him the gift of the

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Holy Spirit, and eternal life.

This was effective for four reasons.

❖ First, Scott showed that it was clearly Biblical.

❖ Second, he made it understandable.

❖ Third, he proved by Scripture that everyone could obey it here and now.

❖ Fourth, he showed the practicality of it. Through his teaching, Scott made it possible for the Spirit to work in a powerful way.

How can we, today, make it possible for the Holy Spirit to convict sinners and lead Christians in the way of the Lord? We must teach them His Word in the most logical,

understandable way possible. We must show them that they can and must obey it immediately. We must bring them face to face with the Lord. We must, through vivid word pictures and Scripture evidences, take them to heaven, and then take them to hell. We must strip them of every excuse.

And, lastly, we must show them how practical their obedience will be. The better we can do these things, the better the Spirit will be able to work.

We have the ability and responsibility to "turn the Spirit loose". †

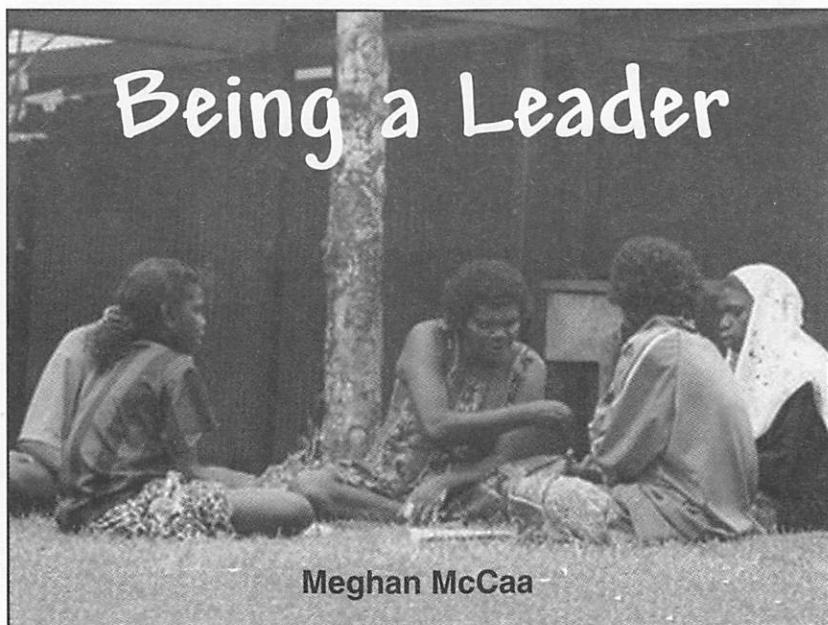
Jack Harriman is a gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

Are You Guilty?

When a wife saw her husband trying to sew on a button, she told him that the thimble was on the wrong finger. "I know," he answered. "It should be on yours."

This amusing little story makes a point that I feel is worth our consideration. Many times we find ourselves being very critical of the way someone else is doing a particular job. He doesn't do it like we would if the task were ours to do, so we begin to point the finger of criticism in his direction. Perhaps the answer to the problem would be found if we would do our fair share of the work and take some of the burden from our brother's shoulders.

The work of the church is never going to be easy, but it could be more effectively done if it were distributed evenly among all the members. It is easy to sit idly on the sidelines and criticize, but it is something else to get into the game. Why not each one put a thimble on his own finger and sew on the buttons together? — Larry Kilpatrick



“Leadership” is a strong, bold, unwavering word. To some people it may seem scary. Just listen to the sound as it rolls off your tongue; you might say that it sounds absolutely frightening! But truthfully, it is not as scary a word as you might think. Leadership is a part of our Christian life. Whether we lead someone to Christ, or lead members of the church in prayer, we are practicing a form of leadership. Jesus implied leadership when he said *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). **Jesus expects us to be leaders!**

I think the word “Leadership” is greatly misunderstood in the church. Being a leader doesn’t mean I have to stand up in front of large crowds and teach, or that I have to organize a mission trip. Leadership can be having a private study with a friend, or inviting a co-worker to worship. It can be helping a Christian brother or sister work through his personal problems, or even teaching someone else how to conduct a Bible study. *Anyone* can be a leader. It doesn’t matter if we have health or financial problems, if we are male or female, or if we are young or old. *Everyone* can be a leader. Consider the following acronym, which is the mission statement of the Parkway Church of Christ:

**Leading people to know God through Jesus Christ.
Equipping members for ministry and spiritual
service.**

**Assisting members to grow in love, holy living,
and fellowship with the community of Christ.**

Declaring God in spiritual and truthful worship.

Let's go over this acronym letter by letter:

“L — Leading people to know God through Jesus Christ” can be accomplished in many ways. It can be done on a local or an international level. You can teach people about God by going on mission trips or through Bible correspondence courses, or by having a Bible study in your own home. Teaching is an important part of leadership.

“E — Equipping members for ministry and spiritual service.” This means that a leader helps other Christians grow in their confidence in teaching or participating in a worship service. It means sharing your knowledge and talents with others, so that they can become better leaders. For example, if you have experience in public speaking, what can you do to help others grow in this area? Help them build up their confidence.

“A — Assisting members to grow in love, holy living, and fellowship with the community of Christ.” There are many people who would like to know more about the members in their congregation, or participate in more events, but they are shy or feel that they are breaking into an established group. Help them to feel welcomed and loved and needed. Help them to grow.

“D — Declaring God in spiritual and truthful worship.” We must put God before ourselves by attending all the assemblies of the church, by setting the right example for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and by worshipping sincerely. Half-hearted or absent-minded “worship” is not worship at all. Our example in true worship strengthens ourselves and others who are following our leadership.

I encourage you to become a leader. You can accomplish eternal things by practicing this acronym. You are greatly needed as a warrior for Christ. Enter the fight today! †

Meghan McCaa is a Christian writer who worships at the Parkway Church of Christ in Naples, Florida, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Finding Patrick

Ken Upchurch



On a recent visit to Tanzania I had the privilege to go with Cy Stafford, Boaz Auma, Don Montgomery and Jonathan McCain to the city of Wanza up on the shores of Lake Victoria. We drove clear across the Serengeti plains in Tanzania and arrived about dark.

Boaz found us a place to stay and then told us he was going to find Patrick, the adopted son of Francis and Margaret Wechesa.

Understand, we were in the second largest city in Tanzania with over a million people, and Boaz is

on foot setting out at dark to find a man who has no phone and no address!

About three hours later Boaz returned to where we were staying and announced, "I have found Patrick and have gotten the address to Isaac's house. We will go there in the morning."

Well, my first question was, "Boaz, how in the world did you find Patrick?"

Boaz replied, "I tracked him down through his Bible studies. I asked a man if they knew Patrick

and he told me he did not know the man's name but there was a fellow who was teaching the Gospel in that area and he gave me directions to the street where he had been teaching. I went there and talked to others who had heard him, and eventually I found someone who knew where he lived.

Unbelievable!! A million people, one fellow, no phone, no address, in the dark of the night!! Only in Africa!

I got to thinking about my own life and wondered if anyone could track me down by the people I had been teaching the Gospel. I would not be far from the mark to say there was a sudden shame that came over me at the realization that, while I would be considered faithful to the Lord, and evangelistic in nature with a desire to spread the

truth, I could not honestly think of any street in my home town where people could tell a stranger that, "We know a man who has been teaching the Gospel and we will take you to him."

No question about it — I must do better. God said to teach His word and it would not come back void. He said to plant the seed (His word) and He would bring forth the increase. That's what I need to be doing. One day someone may be trying to find me and I would hope someone would tell them, "I know that man. He is teaching the Gospel; let me show you where he lives."

Thank you, Patrick, for demonstrating what I should be doing in the Kingdom right in my own city. ✠

Ken Upchurch is a missionary to Tanzania, Africa.

Do You Wear the Name of Christ?

As Christians we should be constantly aware of the great privilege we have in being able to wear the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. As with any privilege, it is accompanied by a host of responsibilities. We learn of our responsibilities through His Holy Word; and, desiring to grow into the image of our "namesake", we study that Word daily. Don't we?

There is a story told about Alexander the Great, who had already conquered the world. He was reviewing his troops when he saw a slovenly soldier who was a disgrace to his company. He asked the soldier for his name. The soldier replied, "Alexander, sir." The world ruler sternly said, "Soldier, change your ways, or change your name!"

— W. Kent Graham

*"He Will
Lift Up
Thy
Head"*

Michael L. King



Recently, while traveling by bus from Rome to Florence, Italy, my wife and I were intrigued by the fields of sunflowers colonnading the Golden Crest Highway. As we traveled northward early in the morning, we observed how the bodies of the sunflower plants were bent and their heads hung low as if praying. Later in the afternoon, as we traversed the same territory, the demeanor of the flowers was much different. Their heads were looking upward and their "backbones" appeared sturdy and straight! Our initial reaction was to question the difference in their appearance. It was soon obvious that the sun was what made the difference.

I thought within myself that man is so similar in nature to those flowers. During the darker hours of one's life, his head becomes heavy with the burdens of growth and responsibility. Life is difficult

enough even under pleasant circumstances, and much more when the darkness comes. During the hours when our Lord was suspended between heaven and earth, His disciples despaired, for their hope was diminished by the "Son's" disappearance, which was soon to take place. He consoled those who loved and believed in Him (John 14:1-4).

The writer of Hebrews encouraged followers to be *"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"* (Hebrews 12:2). In an effort to prevent their becoming *"wearied and faint in their minds,"* they were made to know that Jesus had gone to be seated at God's right hand on His throne (verse 3) and that He would be returning for them (John 14:3).

Our "night" in the experiences of this life might be a season of death, grief, sickness, disappointment, weariness with being consistent in the face of challenge, etc.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Without Christ, the "Son," we cannot lift up our heads and maintain the strength necessary to be faithful until the day of harvest.

Through His inspiration of the Word, the Holy Spirit repeatedly warns God's children how hard life can be, and He encourages faithfulness to the end to receive the everlasting crown (Revelation 2:10). Just like the sunflowers with their heads hanging low, we are not as appealing and attractive to the Lord or to each other when we are overcome and discouraged. But after the sunflowers were exposed to the sun, they became radiant and beautiful!

We are at our best as Christians when looking to the Son for our sustenance and strength. David declared, *"I will lift up mine head above mine enemies...I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord"* (Psalm 27:6). He later declared, *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth...The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul"* (Psalm 121:1,7).

Our walk is to be in the light in which we are able to enjoy perpetual cleansing and fellowship with God (1 John 1:7-9). This light is given by God's providence, *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,*

to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Jesus warned that the iniquitous people would be *"gathered out of His kingdom"* and *"cast into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth...the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matthew 13:41-43).

When we allow the "Son shine" in, life becomes manageable! It then behooves us to beacon the light of Jesus' glorious Gospel to others so the clouds and darkness of despair can dissipate from their lives as well. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). When the only light within us is darkness, *"thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (Matthew 6:23).

In heaven there will be no darkness; *"And the city had no need of the sun, neither the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof...and there shall be no night there...Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever"* (Revelation 21:23; 22:5). Lift up your head and look to the Son! ✠

Michael L. King preaches for the Lakeside Church of Christ in Orange Park, Florida, USA.



The Greatest Thing

Demar Elam

Great it is to believe
the dream
When we stand in youth
by the starry stream;
But a greater thing is
to fight life through
And say at the end,
"The dream was true."

— Edwin Markham

Many scoff and mock
and laugh at those
who dream the seemingly
impossible dream. Men
like Joshua and Caleb,
Gideon, David, the twelve

Apostles, and others too numerous to list, were known for their dreams.

Edwin Markham was so right when he wrote that it is great to believe the dream when one stands in youth by the starry stream, but that a greater thing is to fight life through and turn that dream into a reality.

God can and will do great things through those whose hearts are perfect toward Him (2 Chronicles 16:9). Most of our failures are directly linked to our not relying on God and seeing the task through. Relying on God is the key to success (2 Chronicles 16:8)! Impatience has destroyed untold numbers of dreams, good works, and congregations.

Worthy endeavors are achieved after long periods of struggle, fiery trials, and dependence upon the God of Heaven! In our world today we've developed the "fast food syndrome" toward most everything in life. If we

aren't served in less than five minutes, then we feel we have been wronged and the meal should be free. If our dreams are not fulfilled in short order, then forget them — they're not worth the effort! But worthwhile endeavors do not always come off the assembly line like a Big Mac. First the prayers, then the sweat, then the tears, and finally the years, before the starry eyed youth's dreams are true. The price of patience, struggle, and endurance isn't cheap. Perhaps our "something for nothing, right-now" attitudes prevent the achievement of many great things God might have done through us.

Let us realize the importance of starry-eyed dreaming and the elements involved in making such dreams come true. There is so much God can do with us and through us if we will allow Him. Perhaps we've been guilty of dreaming some seemingly impossible dreams. These worthy goals will not be achieved if we have the "fast food syndrome" or fail to fight the battles, or withstand the fiery trials, or if we fail to rely on God.

It is at this stage of our lives that the words of John Ruskin will be helpful. He said, "Work first and then rest." Jesus said, "*I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" (John 9:4). Now is the time for each Christian to **work!**

Remember, it is great to dream, but it is even greater to see that the dream is true at the end. †

Demar Elam is the Director of Mission Studies at Southern Christian University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

One day I took a look
at myself,
At the self that Christ can see;
I saw the person I am today;
And the one I ought to be.
I saw how little I really pray,
How little I really do;
I saw the influence of my life,
How little of it was true!
I saw my faults and fears
I ought to lay on the shelf;
I had given a little to God,
But I hadn't given myself.
I came away from the mirror,
With my mind made up to be;
A Christian that Christ can use
Both now and eternally.
If you cannot sing like angels;
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus;
You can say He died for all.
If you cannot cross the ocean,
And the heathen land explore,
You can find a heathen closer;
You can find one
just next door.

Unknown



Measures of Greatness

Wayne Barrier

Organizations that are trying to increase productivity and effective reforms often establish quality control programs. This involves defining measures of success and achievement.

What about measures of success and achievement in the world's most important organization — the kingdom of Christ? How do we measure success in the Church? I believe there are several areas of measurement that should be considered. One that will be discussed now is the measure of great things and greatness, based solely on some key passages of scripture in the book of Matthew.

The Greatest People

In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus gives a definition of the *greatest people* in the kingdom of heaven.

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"

The Greatest Position

Jesus, in Matthew 20:20-28, addresses the issue of *great position* in the kingdom of heaven. The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and great apostles of Christ, asked Jesus about their position in His coming kingdom. Notice the response of Jesus in verses 25 through 28 as He says *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great, exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you: but whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

The Greatest Principle

In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus answers a question concerning the *greatest commandment* in the law. Read verses 36 and 40: *“‘Teacher what is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’”*

The Greatest Commander and Mission

As Jesus nears the time of His return to heaven, He states the clear and distinct mission of the church in Matthew 28:18-20. We call this the *great commission*. Jesus says, *“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

The Greatest Organization

In Matthew 16:1 Jesus says *“Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Nothing is greater than this church and nothing on earth can destroy it.

These declarations in Matthew are not difficult to understand. They are not the only statements in Scripture to help us measure quality, success, and achievement in the church, but they certainly cover a broad range of areas. They reflect the great love God has for us (John 3:16) and are consistent with the summary in 1 Corinthians 13:13 which says that the greatest power or spiritual gift is *love*. We can benefit much by incorporating these great things in our perceptions and priorities as we serve as Christians. †

Wayne Barrier, part of the World Evangelism team, lives in Florence, Alabama, USA.

The Blame Game

Francis David

The blame game is an old game. To save ourselves from awkward situations, we sometimes call on the blame game. When children play together, they too often blame each other for problems that arise.

Political parties blame each other for their failures. The ruling party will blame the opposition and the opposition will blame the ruling party.

Families are also affected by the blame game. The husband blames the wife and the wife blames the husband for failures in the marriage, or for problems in finances or the rearing of the children.

Sometimes when children are unable to get good jobs, they blame their parents and their background.

The preacher blames the congregation and the congregation blames the preacher for non-growth in the church. So, we see that this game goes on and on.

The word of God tells us something about this blame game. If we turn to our Bibles, we read that Eve and Adam were involved in this game, also. The third chapter of Genesis records the temptation of Satan and the fall of man.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

"They heard the sound of the LORD GOD walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD GOD among the trees of the garden.

"Then the Lord God called Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'

"And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?'

"Then the man said, 'The woman who you have given to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.'

"And the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?'

"And the woman said, 'The serpent (devil) deceived me, and I ate.'"



Here we see how each one blamed someone else for what they did. Because of their sin and disobedience, they were punished and were driven out of that beautiful garden.

Since it is in man's nature to blame others, we see this problem among Christians also. We find the blame game even in the church! There are members who have deserted the church and Christ and are now unfaithful to Him. They sometimes blame other members or the preacher for their unfaithfulness. They do not accept responsibility for their mistakes and the wrongs

they have done. Rather, they try to excuse themselves by blaming the church.

Some people turn from following after Christ. They are no longer interested in spiritual things. The apostle Peter speaks about such people. He says, "*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into*

bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:18-22).

The unfaithful Christians make their condition worse by leaving the church, and then blaming others for their unfaithfulness. This is really sad. Such people should understand that neither the church nor the preacher is responsible for their wretched condition. Rather, they, themselves, made the decision to leave God and to go back into the world from which they came.

Often, members do not attend the worship services of the church, blaming other members for their absence. They say that such-and-such a brother did not talk to them, or that they asked for help and were refused. The Bible says that we should not be “*forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*” (Hebrews 10:25). Even if someone

does do something wrong toward us, the behaviour of others is still not a legitimate excuse for forsaking our God and the assembling of ourselves together.

Let us stop blaming others for our failures. Let us be *honest* with ourselves, with God, and with the church. In the final analysis, *we are responsible for our own actions*. We are responsible for *our own sins*. We must correct and repent of those sins. Please do not blame the church or brethren or the preacher for your unfaithfulness to the Lord. What we do or what we sow, we will also reap. This is what Paul wrote to the church at Galatia. “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*” (Galatians 6:7).

When you stand before God at the judgment, He will not ask you to give account for anyone else’s actions. He will want to know why *you* did not love Him as *you* should, why *you* did not serve Him as *you* should, why *you* did not honor the Christ who gave His life for *you*.

The blame game did not work in Genesis. It will not work at the judgment either. The time for each one of us to be honest and accept responsibility for our actions is NOW, while we live. †

Francis David is a Gospel preacher in New Delhi, India.

Trials, Persecutions, and Tribulations

Maxie Boren

The apostle Peter spoke of the “manifold trials” that had come upon the early Christians to prove their faith (1 Peter 1:6,7, ASV). Concerning the matter, he wrote further in the same epistle, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you; but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye.... if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name”* (1 Peter 4:12-14, 16).

These words were penned in about A.D. 63. Indeed, about the time Peter wrote this letter, the Roman persecutions had started and were greatly intensified as time went by. The Roman Empire brought cruelties of unthinkable proportions upon the Christians in ten successive persecutions, spanning approximately some three hundred years. During these dreadful times, tens of thousands who were followers of Christ were put to death in ways too horrible to mention.

We cannot possibly identify with such sufferings as our brethren of those times experienced because we’ve never known anything like it. Graphic accounts are sometimes shown in historical video programs, depicting horrific happenings that make one shudder. We can’t conceive of such heartlessness.

The horror didn’t end with the state persecutions of the Roman Empire, however, but there were similar reigns of terror involving the Roman Catholic Church in what is known in history as the Spanish Inquisition. They commenced in 1215 A.D. in a concerted effort by the Papacy to stamp out opposition to its control.

Using the secular arm of governments under its domination, the Inquisition impacted most all of Europe, but nowhere worse than in Spain. The most barbaric and merciless forms of torture were conceived and implemented to exact confessions from those accused as heretics. Thousands were tortured in the most hideous ways conceivable, and countless ones of

them expired or later were executed. It is a fact of history which cannot be denied. Pockets of the Inquisition lasted in various places in Europe into the 1800s.

Most of us think nothing like this could ever happen again. But that is not necessarily true. We live in a world where unimaginable things can and do happen. For example, atrocities of monumental proportions have transpired in the lifetimes of many of us. Think of what the Nazis did to over 6,000,000 people in the death camps of WWII.

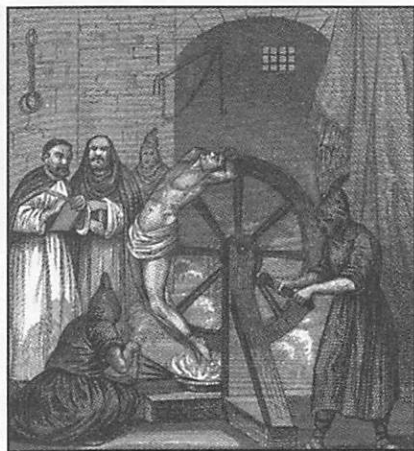
Think of the 20,000,000 Russians killed under the purge of Joseph Stalin. Think of the killing fields of Cambodia! Each of these **in the 20th century!** We certainly hope and pray that our faith will never be tested to such an extreme by religious persecutions — but it could happen!

Therefore, we need to be strengthening our faith every day, that we may prepare ourselves for any eventuality:

- (1) **Read, study, and meditate upon the word of God every day** — Psalm 1:1,2; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Acts 20:32.
- (2) **Pray to God often and fervently for wisdom and strength to face whatever trials of life we may encounter** — James 1:5; Ephesians 3:14-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:17,18.
- (3) **Equip ourselves with the Christian armor, and undergird ourselves every day so that regardless of what we might encounter, we can remain faithful** — 1 Peter 1:13; Ephesians 6:10-17; Revelation 2:10-11.

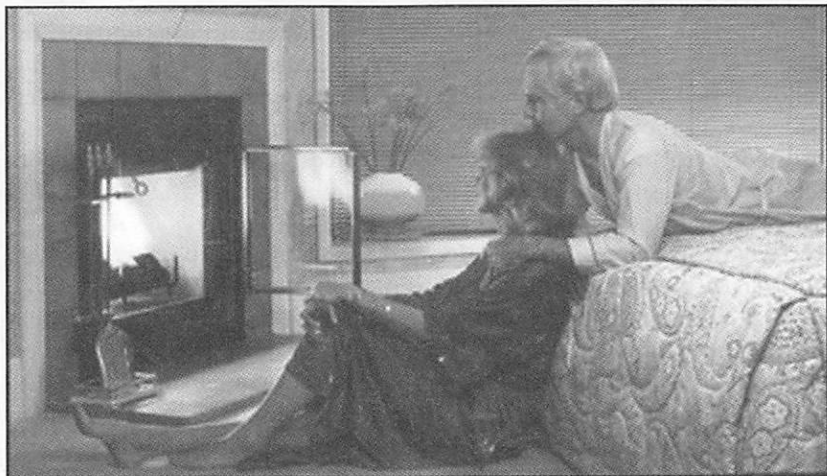
Though we live in a world that can sometimes be brutal and heartless, let us radiate the love of Christ in word and manner of life. For the time being in the USA, we can do that under advantageous circumstances. If the circumstances turn against us someday, we must still continue being faithful. Whatever may come, let us go forth as His messengers, “*wise as serpents and harmless as doves*” (Matthew 10:16). May we never forget that our “warfare” is not carnal, but spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). †

Maxie B. Boren preaches for the Brown Trail Church of Christ in Bedford, Texas, USA.



The Wife of Your Youth

Frances Parr



***“Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you.
Rejoice in the wife of your youth.”***

Solomon, a man of utmost wisdom, said these words many years ago. One wonders about this remark from a man who had 300 wives. Perhaps this fact alone qualified him to make the statement!

Today we are bombarded with what the world terms “young love”. Anything that suggests the emotion of love is usually illustrated with young people. Often love and sex are viewed as being synonymous. However, there is much to be said for love and devotion among the

elderly. True, mature love may not be the intense, passionate feelings experienced in younger days, but rather something much more rewarding and satisfying.

Consider the example in the Bible of Abraham and Sarah, or Abram and Sarai, as they were originally named. We find them first mentioned in Genesis 12:1 when God spoke to Abram, telling him to move to a foreign country. God didn't even tell the man where he was going; only that He would

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show him the way. Genesis 12:4 says Abram was 75 years old at that time, and we learn later that his wife was ten years younger. Don't you imagine Sarai had something to say about moving their entire household when they had no idea where they would be going? Nevertheless, she followed her husband for the next 62 years as they wandered from their home in Ur, across the land to the Great Sea, and down to Egypt and back again to Canaan.

Abraham and Sarah were devoted to each other all of their married life. True, they had problems from time to time, but 1 Peter 3:6 says that "*she obeyed him, calling him lord.*" When she died at age 127, Abraham mourned and wept for her (Genesis 23:2).

In homes for the aged, this writer has observed husbands and wives and their deep love for each other. In one instance, the wife is unable to understand or communicate with her husband, yet she sits wrapped in his arms with her head on his shoulder. The expression on her face is of utter contentment.

Another couple holds hands constantly. Often the husband looks at his wife, and without words they share a joke or some common amusement, which makes them both smile. Their eyes are full of laughter when they look at each other.

Without a doubt, the many

years and a lifetime of experiences these couples have shared make their declining years together sweeter as each day goes by. Youth has not had time to build relationships such as these.

Married couples today face many challenges. It takes daily give and take, understanding, and tolerance for a marriage to survive. Divorces have become very easy to obtain; however, "*The Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce...*" (Malachi 2:16). Those who give up on marriage and choose divorce instead are breaking the first institution God provided for humanity. We cannot deliberately break faith with our marriage partner without first breaking faith with God.

As with every other good gift God has given mankind, Satan seeks to destroy marriage. His weapons are misunderstandings, anger, unforgiving hearts, suspicion, and the proverbial carrot: "Throw away this marriage. It isn't working for you. The perfect husband/wife is waiting just around the corner..."

But these are Satan's lies. True, there are hardships and problems in any relationship, but the long-term rewards in a marriage of love and faithfulness are worth whatever effort they cost. †

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, USA.

Every Marriage Needs A Box Top

by Mike Benson



Those of us who graduated from the sixth grade long ago can still learn. Read the following story and see if you don't gain some insights:

"Last fall I divided my sixth grade Sunday school class into three groups for an interesting contest. As my twelve-year-olds gathered in three circles on the floor, I explained that there was only one rule in our competition: Each group had to put together a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without talking.

"I poured the contents of the puzzles on the floor in front of each group, warning them again that they could not talk. The first group went immediately to work, promptly setting up the top of the puzzle box, which gave everyone a clear view of the picture they were trying to put together.

"The second group tried to do the same thing, but they didn't

know that I had switched the top of their puzzle box with the top from another puzzle. I had deliberately given them the wrong lid. Not knowing that, they set up their box top to use as a guide to assemble their puzzle and went swiftly to work.

"As the third group gathered around the pile of pieces I had poured on the floor, the kids were dismayed to discover that I had given them no box top whatsoever to use as a guide. They started to protest, but I reminded them that there was to be no talking!

"What followed was fascinating.

"The members of Group One were somewhat frustrated by not being allowed to talk, but they still made steady progress because they had a correct picture or plan to work from. Everyone in that group got motivated as the outline of the picture started to emerge.

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“It didn’t take the members of Group Two long to realize something was wrong. They kept trying to use the box top picture in front of them, but nothing seemed to work. And since they couldn’t talk together, their frustration level soared.

“One boy waved his hand in the air and acted as though he was about to burst. I relented and allowed him to whisper in my ear, ‘Mr. Rainey,’ he muttered, ‘you gave us the wrong picture. It’s the wrong lid — it’s just not there!’

“I smiled, patted him on his shoulder, and said, ‘Shhh, no talking.’

“As I turned away, others in his group looked at me with pleading eyes, wondering what they could do. Their puzzle just wasn’t coming together.

“But Group Three really captured my attention. Because the group had no picture at all to go by, each kid was doing his own thing. There wasn’t even an attempt at teamwork and, of course, there was no progress.

“Some members just sat individually, randomly searching for two pieces that seemed to fit. Two of the boys were so bored they started launching puzzle pieces like miniature Frisbees across the room. Others just lay there with their eyes closed. Hopelessness hung in the air.

“After letting them work a little longer, I called a halt to the competition and explained what was going on and then I made my point: you can’t live life without a plan” [Dennis Rainey, “The Master Plan for Oneness,” *Lonely Husbands, Lonely Wives*, 117-118].

Observations:

1. God has given us a box top. And He answered and said to them, *“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matthew 19:4-6; cf. Genesis 2:18, 21-24).

2. Every marriage needs this “guide” [i.e., box top] to bring order out of chaos (2 Peter 1:3; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:2; 6:13; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

3. Husbands and wives can find true joy, stability and intimacy only when they pattern their lives after the divine plan (cf. John 10:10; cf. Ephesians 5:22-33; Titus 2:4-5). †

Mike Benson works with the Oak Hill Church of Christ in Evansville, Indiana, USA. This article appeared on their web site, www.oakhillcoc.org.

What Parents Owe Their Children

Dale Grissom

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

On the surface, this admonition seems to be to children, yet it contains a direct application to parents as well: We parents have a responsibility to live worthy of our children's honor and respect. Children deserve to grow up in homes where they will be trained and restrained (Proverbs 22:6; 13:24; 23:13; 22:5) and where the proper example will be set for them.

It is important that children see their parents living lives devoted to God. They should see Mom and Dad spending time in prayer and Bible study, and engaging in family devotionals. Their home life should be one in which they see humility, service, and reverence to God practiced. It is not enough to tell our children the way; we must live it before them.

Fathers especially have a great responsibility, as they have been charged with providing spiritual leadership for their families. *"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* A wise Father will turn to the Scriptures for guidance, and he

will strive to put into practice the things he learns. We can read many examples of good and bad parenting in the Bible, but the account of Eli is a particularly sobering one. While he was a great judge of Israel (1 Samuel 3), he was a failure as a father. He did not train his sons to be good men, and they paid the ultimate price.

Consider the Christian graces found in 2 Peter 1:5-8. *"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

May we strive to take on these qualities and teach them to our children. And may God bless us and guide us as we do so. †

Dale Grissom works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

Truth and Our Children

Joe Magee

*"The truthful lip shall be established forever,
but a lying tongue is but for a moment"* (Proverbs 12:19).

The proponents of situation ethics would have us to believe that lying is sometimes justified. They will cite examples of life-saving incidents where telling the truth would have resulted in greater calamity than telling a lie. They seldom try to paint the whole picture.

A few years back, this nation was in an international drama involving the giving of false testimony to a Senate Committee. Before the eyes of the whole world, lying was held up as expedient, and the liar was seen in the eyes of some as a national hero. The ultimate damage done by those lies has never been evaluated and probably never will be. How do you

measure the end result of lying? Nations have fallen, lives have been sacrificed, families destroyed, and perhaps the course of history changed because of lying. As our text suggests, the lie may be quickly detected, but the damage may be irreparable.

We who are in positions of leadership must teach our children the age-old maxim, "Truth may be blamed but never shamed." Parents are devastated and embarrassed when they learn that their



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child has lied. "What to do?" "How to correct?" "What punishment fits the crime?" Perhaps the question should be, "Why do children lie?"

Children may lie for one or more of the following reasons:

- ◆ To avoid trouble.
- ◆ To get attention.
- ◆ To exercise an over-active imagination.

To overcome these tendencies, parents must not panic, but react with a positive assertion of parental guidance. When it is obvious that the child has an over-active imagination, while his lying should be challenged and exposed, it should be recognized that this tendency will usually subside. Insisting that the child back up and restate his facts often proves embarrassing enough to suppress his fantasy.

If a child's lying seems to be from a lack of attention, make a careful evaluation of the time you are spending with the child, and then give the time and/or attention he/she needs.

If the lying is to avoid trouble, the problem may be more serious, but can usually be handled more quickly. Let the child know that lying multiplies the trouble, and that telling the truth has its own rewards. While he may have to be punished for his conduct, he can be praised for and rewarded for his truthful admissions.

Perhaps the most important lesson your child will learn on the subject of lying and telling the truth is what he sees in the lives of those he loves the most, in the continual example of honesty in his parents. †

Joe Magee serves the Lord in Yale, Oklahoma, USA.

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25).

"For he who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:10,11).



A timid employee asked his boss, "Sir, can you let me off tomorrow afternoon to go shopping with my wife?"

"Absolutely not! We are much too busy," was the boss's answer.

The employee quickly replied, "Thank you very, very much, sir. You are very kind!"



Getting babies to go to sleep is hardest when they are about 18 years old.



A man was buying a shirt for his son's graduation gift.

"It's to be a surprise, I suppose," said the clerk.

"I'll say it is," said the father. "He's expecting a new car."

How to Stay Safe in the World Today

1. Avoid riding in automobiles because they are responsible for 20% of all fatal accidents.
2. Do not stay home because 17% of all accidents occur in the home.
3. Avoid walking on streets or sidewalks because 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians.
4. Avoid traveling by air, rail, or water because 16% of all accidents involve these forms of transportation.
5. Of the remaining 33%, 32% of all deaths occur in hospitals. Above all else, avoid hospitals.
6. You will be pleased to learn that only .001% of all deaths occur in worship services of the church, and these are usually related to previous physical disorders. Therefore, logic tells us that the safest place for you to be at any given point in time is at worship!

Bible study is safe too. The percentage of deaths during Bible study is even less.

FOR SAFETY'S SAKE:

Attend church services and study your Bible ... IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!



To avoid that run-down feeling, cross streets carefully.

PROVERBS 17:22

A thoughtful wife is one who has the pork chops ready when her husband comes home from a fishing trip.



Why Are Fire Trucks Red?

Fire trucks have four wheels and eight firefighters, and four plus eight equals twelve. There are twelve inches in a foot. A foot is a ruler. Queen Elizabeth is a ruler and the Queen Elizabeth is one of the largest ships on the seven seas. Seas have fish. Fish have fins. The Finns fought the Russians. The Russians are red. Fire trucks are always rushin'. Therefore, fire trucks are usually red!

Now, if you think that is wild, you ought to hear some people trying to explain why they are not attending Bible Study and worship on Sundays and midweek Bible classes!

Blessed are they who have nothing to say and who cannot be persuaded to say it.



Mother: "Where is Jimmy this afternoon?"

Father: "If he knows as much about canoes as he thinks he does, he's out canoeing, but if he doesn't know any more about it than I think he does, he's swimming."

A husband complained that the neighbors keep him broke. They always buy things his wife can't afford.



Grandpa says it now costs more to amuse a child than it once did to educate his father!



The occasion was an amateur musical. The kind-hearted hostess, spying a lonely-looking little man huddled in a corner of the room, paused to make conversation.

"Tell me," she asked, "do you play any musical instrument?"

"Not away from home," the little man replied.

"How peculiar," remarked the hostess. "What instrument do you play at home?"

"Second fiddle," the little man replied.



After a neighbor's wife gave birth to triplets, a father asked his son what he thought of the event.

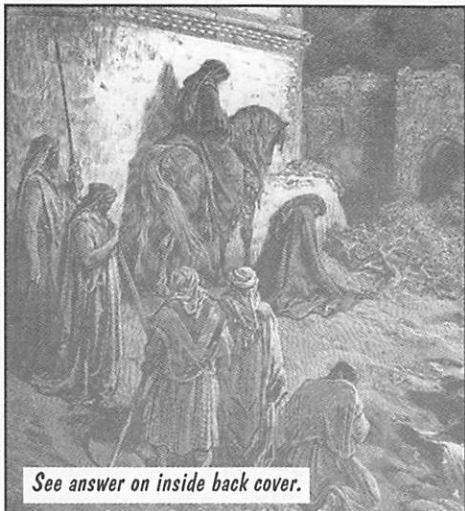
"They'd better start finding a place for them," the little boy replied. "They won't be as easy to get rid of as kittens."

Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc.

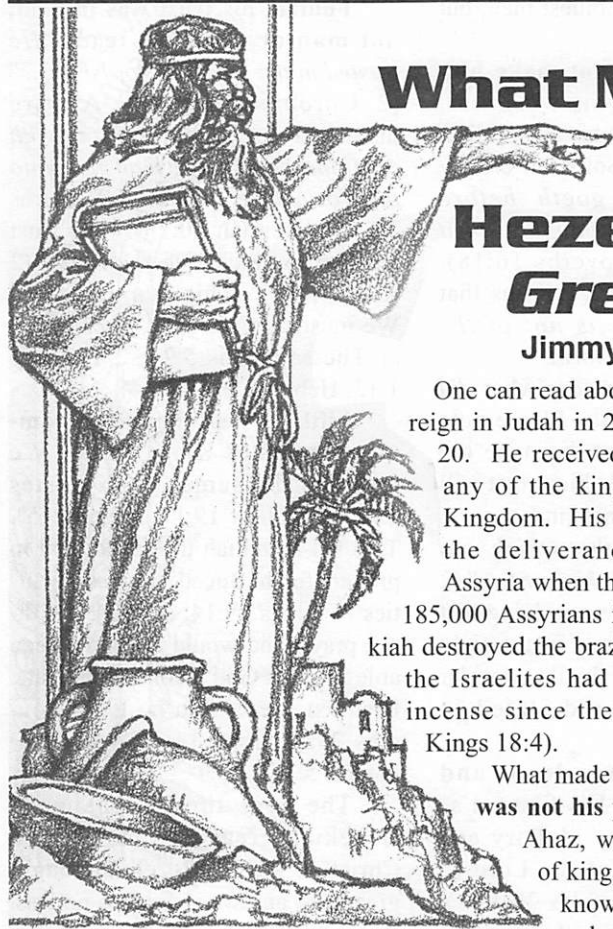
When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word.

1. **100** I was the son of Hachaliah, and I lived in Shushan (Chapter 1:1,2).
2. **90** My life and work were in the same period, chronologically, as the scribe, Ezra (8:9).
3. **80** When I heard that my people were in trouble, I became so upset that I was asked, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? There is nothing but sorrow of the heart" (2:2).
4. **70** In the book that bears my name, several times I explained my actions in these words: "...my God had put in my heart to do..." (2:2).
5. **60** By night I went out with a few men and surveyed the work I had undertaken to do for my people (2:12).
6. **50** I organized the people into an extremely efficient work force, so that the construction was completed in 52 days (6:15).
7. **40** I heard the outcry of my people against the nobles of my people, who were abusing their positions of authority, and I appealed to them to walk in the fear of God (Chapter 5).
8. **30** Many of the people had become corrupted by intermarriage with unbelievers, and I urged them to give up their foreign wives (13:23-27).
9. **20** Through the reading of the law and subsequent reforms, I restored the sacrifices and worship of God (Chapters 8-10).
10. **10** At the close of my service for God, my prayer was, "Remember me, O my God, for good (13:14; 22; 30).



See answer on inside back cover.

My Score _____



What Made Hezekiah Great?

Jimmy Young

One can read about Hezekiah's good reign in Judah in 2 Kings chapters 18-20. He received higher praise than any of the kings in the Southern Kingdom. His reign brought about the deliverance of Judah from Assyria when the angel of God slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent to which the Israelites had continued to offer incense since the time of Moses (2 Kings 18:4).

What made him a great king? It was **not his parents**. His father, Ahaz, was one of the worst of kings. I am sure all of us know or have known several righteous children

with ungodly parents, or vice-versa. Environment and family influence are important, but in spite of these things, each is responsible for himself.

His children did not make him great. His son, Manasseh, was also a wicked king (2 Kings 21), counted as the worst of Judah's kings. Think about this: Hezekiah had an evil father and rose above him. Manasseh had a righteous father and fell below him.

Hezekiah's age did not make him great. He ascended the throne at the age of twenty-five (2 Kings 18:2). Age does not contribute to greatness.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Methuselah was the oldest man, but not the greatest.

His pride did not make him great. Pride was his weakness, which brought about his downfall (2 Kings 20:12,13). Solomon clearly teaches, "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18). John, in 1 John 2:16, tells us that "*the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.*"

Now, let us consider what *did* make Hezekiah great. Please note carefully each point, because the very things that made him great will do the same for all mankind.

First, "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord..." (2 Kings 18:3). He was not doing that which was right merely in the sight of man. Each of us should consider what Paul asked and stated in Galatians 1:10.

Second, he was loyal and uncompromising. His first act as king was to destroy idolatry and cleanse the house of the Lord (2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 29:3-11). When will man learn that putting anything or anybody before God is idolatry?

Third, he was a man of action! He wasted no time. Immediately, he began his work as a reformer (2 Chronicles 29:2,36). Indecision and a lack of action have caused many to fail.

Fourth, his trust was in God, not man or self. We read, "*He trusted in the Lord God of Israel...*" (2 Chronicles 18:5). All are instructed to "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding*" (Proverbs 3:5; cf Jeremiah 10:23). His trust led him to "*cleave to the Lord*" (2 Kings 18:6). This is a necessity. We must, as Christians, "*hold fast*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 3:14, 4:14).

Fifth, he kept the Lord's commandments (2 Kings 18:6). We must do the same (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 19:17; John 14:15). This led Hezekiah to turn to God in prayer, for he faced many difficulties (2 Kings 19:14; 20:1-3). Without prayer, he would not have been able to keep God's commandments. Brethren, we can do no less (Proverbs 23:23, John 14:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

The very things that made Hezekiah great will make each Christian great. Hezekiah sought greatness, and we should do no less. If we do that which is right in the sight of God, remain loyal and uncompromising, be a person of action, trust in God by cleaving to Him, and pray — we, too, will be great. What is your desire? †

Jimmy Young preaches for the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

Unlikely Heroines

Betty Tucker

When heroes of the Bible are mentioned, many names spring to the forefront of our minds... Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David.

On the feminine side of the equation, these names clamor for attention... Ruth, Rebekkah, Esther. All of us could readily tell of the heroic actions of these ladies who walked across the pages of Holy Writ.

Two Unknowns

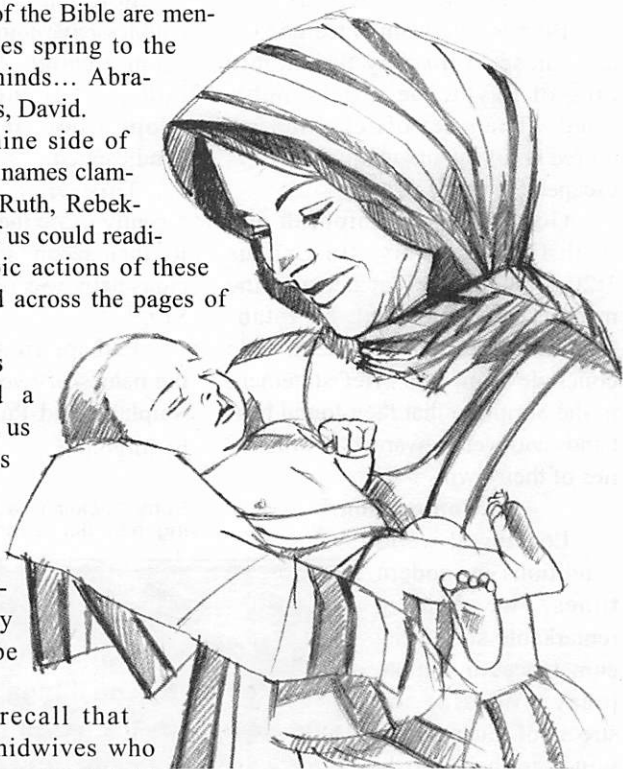
If we asked a Bible class to tell us about two ladies mentioned in the first chapter of Exodus whose names were Shiprah and Puah, they probably would be at a complete loss.

Few would recall that these were two midwives who tended the Hebrew women held captive in Egypt under Pharaoh's harsh rule. They more likely were in charge of all of those who delivered the babies of Hebrew ladies.

This ruler became fearful that the Israelites would grow to be so numerous that they would revolt. So, he instructed these two midwives to kill all of the male children at birth. The baby girls would pose no threat to the monarch, so they could live.

The Decree Is Ignored

These women refused to do as the Pharaoh bade them, and they deliv-



BIBLE CHARACTERS

ered the boy babies alive to their mothers. When questioned, they replied that the Hebrew women were too robust, and delivered their babies before the midwives arrived.

Because the women feared God and chose to disobey the mighty king of Egypt, the people multiplied. Their act of rebellion required courage, and many little boys escaped the death decree.

God rewarded Shiphrah and Puah for their piety. In Exodus 1:20,21 we learn that because the midwives feared God, he established households for them. We conclude from this brief statement in the Scripture that they found husbands and were rewarded with families of their own.

A Comparison

Looking at world conditions in modern times, we find a remarkable set of circumstances in China, today. Walking the streets of Guangzhou, you see billboards dominating the walls of sixteen-story buildings which show the Chinese family...one mother, one father, and one child.

If a Chinese woman learns that she is to deliver a baby girl,

she usually aborts the child. Girls are considered of little value in their culture, while boys are shining stars in the family circle.

In recent years, many childless couples have journeyed to China to adopt a child. They return with a little girl. If anyone is allowed to adopt a boy, it is because he is handicapped.

This writer has friends who recently made the long trek to China for their second little girl. Each precious baby was obtained at a cost of \$17,000!

Perhaps from this brief study, the names of two unlikely heroines, Shiphrah and Puah, will no longer be forgotten. †

Betty Tucker is a Christian writer living in Linden, Tennessee, USA.

**BEGIN EACH DAY with a simple prayer
To let God know you're glad He's there.
Praise Him for the things He's done
As He unveils the morning sun.
Rise and shine; get out of bed,
And thank Him for the day ahead.
Wear a smile, don't look depressed;
Show the world that you've been blessed.
Stand straight and tall, don't be afraid
For this is the day the Lord has made!**

— Clay Harrison

Joshua, A Man of Courage

Rick Cunningham

Joshua was chosen by God to lead the nation of Israel into the promised land. Moses was dead. Joshua had the sole responsibility. He was the new leader. God told Joshua, *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you or forsake you"* (Joshua 1:5).

Joshua knew what was being asked of him. All he had to do was lead a nation of nomadic people into an occupied, hostile land, conquer and kill all the people there, divide the spoils between the various tribes of Israel, and maintain the spiritual purity of God's Word during and after the conquest. What an assignment!

The task was too great for the human nervous system. Fear, dread, apprehension, doubts, worries, and such would surely undermine Joshua's resolve. So God spoke further. *"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and*

night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:6-9).

Joshua was strong and courageous. He *did* meditate on and keep God's Word. He was prosperous and successful. And after the conquest, *"the people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel"* (Judges 2:7).

Do you have a difficult, God-given assignment? Is it hard on your nervous system? Does it seem too great? **Be strong and courageous.** Meditate on and keep God's Word. He will be with you and never forsake you. He will make you successful. *Your part* is to act with courage, and to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left.

As Paul said, *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:13). †

Rick Cunningham is the preacher for the 14th & Main Church of Christ in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

Two Questions About God

Kevin L. Moore

How can God be “jealous” (Exodus 20:5) and still be a sinless God?

The word “jealous” in the Bible is used in both a positive and a negative sense. The basic meaning of both the Hebrew *kin'ah* and Greek *zelos* is “to be inflamed”, whether in the good sense of “zeal” (Numbers 25:11; 2 Corinthians 11:2), or in the bad sense of “envy” (Acts 7:9; 2 Corinthians 12:20). Obviously, when the word is attributed to God it is used in a good sense. God is like a “husband” to His people (Jeremiah 31:32), and therefore He has the right to claim exclusive devotion. Disloyalty to this relationship is depicted as spiritual “adultery” (Jeremiah 3:8,9), carrying with it dire consequences. The difference between God’s jealousy and man’s jealousy is that man’s jealousy is self-seeking, whereas God’s jealousy ultimately has man’s best interests at heart.

Paul wrote concerning God’s jealousy: *“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:2)..

What is meant by God "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate (Him)" (Exodus 20:5)?

It is important to distinguish between what God *causes* to happen and what He simply *permits* to happen. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father: "*And do not lead us into temptation...*" (Luke 11:4). This does not mean that God *actively leads* people into temptation (cf James 1:13), but the idea is that you are asking that God "*will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able...*" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God does not *compel* us to make bad choices, but since He *grants us freedom* (which necessitates the possibility of making bad choices), in a sense He is responsible because of the very liberty He permits us to have. The knowledge of good and evil, **with the freedom of choice to obey or disobey God**, is one thing that separates us from animals. The only way to avoid the dilemma of bad decisions on our part would be for God to take away our freedom of choice. If He did that, He would leave us less than human.

God has established natural and spiritual laws which unavoidably

entail certain consequences for those who violate them. We not only suffer for our own sins, but sometimes we suffer because of the sins of others. The child of an alcoholic suffers neglect, abuse, poverty, shame, and often the disposition of his drunken parent. God permits this to happen simply because there is no other way if His creation is to be genuinely free.

Suffering *the consequences* of our own as well as other people's sins is in accordance with the inflexible laws of the universe. However, *the guilt* of a parent's sin is not imputed on his offspring (Ezekiel 18:20). Each person is accountable for his/her own actions.

But notice also in Exodus 20:5 that the descendants who suffer, even to the third and fourth generations, are **those who hate God**. In the very next verse the Lord affirms that He shows "*mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*" †

Kevin L. Moore teaches at Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tennessee, USA.



It is common to hear men say that salvation is by faith only. The doctrine of “faith only” is taught in many creed books, magazines, and pamphlets — but not in the Bible. The only time “faith” and “only” are found together in the King James Version of the Bible is in James 2:24. That verse says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only.**”

The word “works” in that verse refers to actions of faith. Abraham acted on faith

Can One Be Saved by “Faith Only”?

Royce Frederick

when he offered his son Isaac (James 2:21). Rahab acted on faith when she helped the two spies (James 2:25).

In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther was so determined to promote the doctrine of “faith only” that he rejected the book of James in the New Testament portion of the Bible. He realized that a person cannot believe the doctrine of “faith only” and believe the book of James. Also, when he translated Romans 1:17, he was not satisfied with the statement “*the righteous shall live by faith*”. He added the word “alone” after the word “faith”.

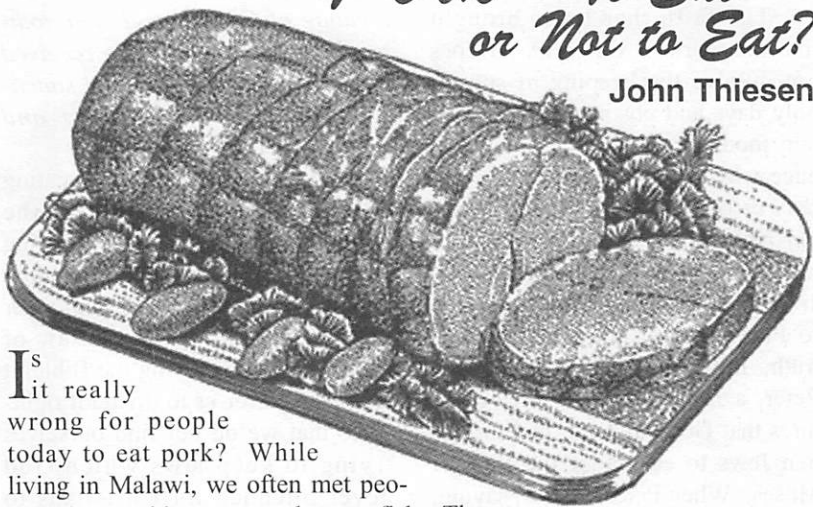
The New Testament certainly teaches that sinners are saved by faith and that they live by faith, but not by “faith only”. The apostle Paul explains that the kind of faith we must have is “*faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6). A faith which “believes” but fails to obey is “barren” (James 2:20) and “dead” (James 2:17,26).

The faith which saves is active, obedient faith. A sinner is saved by faith when he surrenders to the Lord in baptism for the forgiveness of his sins. Paul reminded the Colossian Christians of the time when they obeyed the Gospel: “*buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead*” (Colossians 2:12). †

Royce Frederick, editor of *International Gospel Teacher*, lives in Lufkin, TX, USA.

Pork - To Eat or Not to Eat?

John Thiesen



Is it really wrong for people today to eat pork? While living in Malawi, we often met people who would not eat pork or catfish. They said that they did not eat the flesh of these animals and various others because the Bible declares them to be unclean. Since there are also many who feel this way in other places, it will be good to look at what the Scriptures teach on unclean foods.

Ceremonial Uncleanness in Ancient Israel

It is true that, in the Law of Moses, the law given to the Jewish people, pork and the flesh of many other animals were pronounced unclean to the Israelites. A list of all these is found in Leviticus 11, some of which were the camel, hare, swine, eagle, hawk, swan, pelican, stork, bat, and any creeping creature. The purpose of these food ordinances was to set apart ceremonially — to sanctify — the nation of Israel as God's special people, separating them from the rest of the nations (Leviticus 11:44,45).

However, this did not mean that these meats were *intrinsically* unclean, but they were only pronounced to be so, and were forbidden, for religious purposes. The apostle Paul, speaking by the inspiration of God, said, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself" (Romans 14:14). He also said, "Let no man judge you in meat," and explained that the dietary ordinances and holy days, along with the rest of the Law of Moses, were "nailed to the cross" when Christ came (Colossians 2:14-17).

**God Has Cleansed All
Foods Today**

The faith that Jesus brought into the world is different. It does not involve the keeping of special holy days and abstinence from certain foods. Paul showed the difference when he said, "*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*" (Romans 14:17). God even showed a vision to Peter to convince him of this truth. In the vision, He commanded Peter, a Jew, to eat the very creatures that God, Himself, had forbidden Jews to eat under the Law of Moses. When Peter refused, saying, "*Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean,*" God told him, "*What God had cleansed, that call not thou common*" (Acts 10:9-16).

The apostle Paul further explained it like this: "*For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*" (1 Timothy 4:4,5).

The law concerning the eating of pork was given only to the Jewish people. It was never binding on Gentiles, and neither is it binding on Christians today. We live under the law of Christ, not the law of Moses. When studying the Bible, it is important for us to divide it rightly so that we do not find ourselves trying to keep laws which God never intended for Christians to observe. †

John Thiesen preaches in Buffalo, Missouri, USA., and is a Spanish translator for *The Voice of Truth International*.

Three Reasons for Being a Christian

Because of our Past. The Bible says, "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). But "*...the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). When we become Christians, our sins are taken away, this death abolished, and the burden of past guilt removed.

Because of our Present. With the forgiveness of sins, the Christian has peace with God, peace of mind, and the joy of anticipating Heaven ahead. Full happiness in this world is not possible until one becomes a Christian.

Because of our Future. Without Christ, our future would be bleak and horrible. In Him, we shall see a place where there will be no more tears, death, sorrow, or pain (Revelation 21:4). — **John Thiesen**

Solomon on Life

Ken Tyler

Purpose:

To remind each of us how to live our lives, that many of the things that may seem important to us in this world have no eternal value.

- I. **Do your best.** *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- II. **Lasting satisfaction is not found in what you possess.** *“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10).
- III. **Realize the importance of work.** *“The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much...”* (Ecclesiastes 5:12).
- IV. **Fill your life with good.** *“If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he”* (Ecclesiastes 6:3). Realize you are here to do good and to be good.
- V. **Realize the importance of a good name.** *“A good name is better than precious ointment...”* (Ecclesiastes 7:1). See also Ecclesiastes 10:1.
- VI. **Realize the foolishness of anger.** *“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools”* (Ecclesiastes 7:9).
- VII. **Don't ever forget your purpose in life.** *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

Conclusion:

“Remember now thy creator...” (Ecclesiastes 12:1) are great words. Are you remembering? †

Ken Tyler preaches for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Grace and Salvation

Ardron Hinton

INTRODUCTION: *Romans 3:22-26, "...For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ."*

The Human Problem

1. All have sinned (transgression — 1 John 3:4).
2. All fall short (unprofitable — Luke 17:10).

The Divine Response to Sin:

The Divine Response Summarized:

1. **Justified** (declaring that a person is just or guiltless).
2. **Freely** (willingly done and as a gift).
3. **By His Grace** (favor or kindness, especially where it is undeserved).

The Divine Response Explained:

1. **Redemption** (purchasing freedom at a price — 1 Peter 1:18,19).
2. **Propitiation** (the price paid — Christ's blood, His life — Mark 10:45).
3. **Justification** (declaring a person "just" because his sin-penalty is paid by Christ).

The Human Response to Grace

1. **Human response is possible because —**
In His **forbearance** God had passed over sin in the past (Hebrews 10:1-18).
In His **justice** God has provided a complete remedy for sin (1 John 1:7).
2. **This human response is rooted in, and based upon, faith —**
Not in dependence upon keeping laws and regulations (Romans 6:14).
Not in confidence in our own works (Romans 11:6).
But in dependence upon and confidence in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8).
And this faith must be as active as the grace to which it is responding (Matthew 7:21. Note the word "demonstrate" used twice here. Read James 2:14-26; 2 Corinthians 2:9; and Hebrews 5:8,9).

CONCLUSION:

1 Corinthians 16:23, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Ephesians 6:24, *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.* †

Ardron Hinton served as a missionary in Malawi and has preached for thirty years for the church of Christ in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

The Best Gift

At the close of his will, Patrick Henry is said to have written, "I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one more thing I wish I could give them and that is the Christian religion. If they had that, and I had not given them one shilling, they would have been rich; and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."

We realize, of course, that religion cannot be willed to our heirs in the same sense as cash, bonds, or an estate might be left to them. However, what *we* are now will largely determine what *our children* will grow up to be. If we have no love for God, for His Bible, and for His church, the chances are high that our children will develop the same attitudes. If we place the pleasures of this life above the hope of heaven, if we put more emphasis upon treasures on earth than upon treasures in heaven, our children will probably learn to share these same misdirected priorities. We teach our children more by how we live than by what we say. Take a long, hard look at yourself. What you see now in yourself, you will eventually see in the lives of your children.

Albert Einstein, the great thinker, was once asked what were the most important considerations in raising children. He replied, "Well, there are three principles: example, example, example." The inspired apostle Paul, an even greater thinker, wrote, "*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). This is the best gift a parent can give a child.

— Dalton Key

Lessons From the Book of Lamentations

Wayne Jackson

"This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'" (Lamentations 3:21-23).

One of the little-known portions of the Bible is the Book of Lamentations. Although frequently neglected by some students, this narrative contains some rich deposits of truth which will abundantly reward those who examine its contents.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah, was its inspired penman.

If one is to appreciate the message of this holy treatise, he must understand the events which relate to its contents.

After the destruction of the ten tribes of Israel by Assyria (721 B.C.), the citizens of Judah continued to degenerate spiritually. Though there were occasional periods of reformation, they were both superficial and temporary. Finally, the time for punishment had come. Jehovah providentially brought

Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians against Judah. Eight years later, the army of Nebuchadnezzar came again to Jerusalem and besieged the city. The temple was ransacked. Its vessels of gold were confiscated and cut into pieces. Also, many Hebrews were taken captive to Babylon (2 Kings 24:10-17). Zedekiah was appointed as a puppet-king over the "poorest sort of the people" who had not been transported to Babylon.

However, Zedekiah later rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar came again with his army. Jerusalem was besieged for almost eighteen months. Conditions within the city were dreadful. *"...Famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land"* (2 Kings 25:3). Finally, a breach was made in the city. The invading army *"had no compassion upon*

young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed" (2 Chronicles 36:17). The remaining vessels of the temple were taken, and the Babylonians *"burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire...."* Truly, it was a horrible spectacle.

The prophet Jeremiah was a witness to the spiritual death of the city of Jerusalem, and the book of Lamentations is actually a funeral dirge that depicts the suffering and sorrow which attended Jerusalem's death. It was doubtless sung by the Jews in captivity as a reminder of their sorrow, and especially the sins of their past which precipitated the destruction of the Holy City. For study purposes, Lamentations may be divided into five sections, corresponding to the chapter segments.

The Suffering of Jerusalem (1)

The desolation of Jerusalem and the resulting sadness is the theme of this section. Jerusalem, once *"great among the nations,"* now sits as a weeping and solitary widow whom none can comfort. She has been greatly afflicted *"for the multitude of her transgressions."* For these things, says the prophet, *"I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water."*

It is important that we note a valuable principle here. No matter how great one has been in the past,

that status can be altered by a change in conduct. Great reputations have been destroyed almost overnight by apostasy.

The Suffering of the Sanctuary (2)

This section deals with the destruction of the temple and the heartbreak connected therewith. In the day of God's anger, not even His "footstool" is spared. (See 1 Chronicles 28:2 where the temple is called the footstool of God.) Indeed Jehovah had *"violently taken away his tabernacle"* and *"destroyed his place of assembly."* (This shows that the destruction of the temple was not strictly of the Babylonians; it was God working through them!) When reflecting upon the horror, Jeremiah exclaimed, *"Mine eyes do fail with tears, my heart is troubled...."* Sad though it was, it fulfilled the oracle of centuries past, for *"Jehovah hath done that which he purposed; he hath fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old."*

The Suffering of Jeremiah (3)

"This chapter is the mountain peak of the book. Here Jeremiah bares his heart to the reader, as he frequently does in prophecy. His life was one long martyrdom, in which he served as both judge and intercessor for people bent on their own destruction. No prophet ever pleaded with a people in more impassioned manner, calling for a

national conversion, than did he. And no one, except Jesus, was treated with more national contempt than he" (Ross Price, **Wycliffe Bible Commentary**). Every truly spiritual person will be concerned for the welfare of God's people as a whole. The faithful Christian must never isolate himself and ignore the condition of the church as it exists everywhere. Note Paul's empathy for the congregations of the Lord's people throughout the world (2 Corinthians 11:28).

The Suffering of the Siege (4)

As mentioned earlier, during the eighteen-month siege of Jerusalem, conditions became intolerable. Famine was acute. *"The tongue of the suckling child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst...."* Conditions were so horrible that *"the hands of pitiful women have boiled their own children,"* so that *"they that are slain with the sword are better than they that are slain with hunger."*

Again, we must call attention to certain truths here. First, we must remember that in a world plagued with evil, sometimes even the innocent suffer. Second, apostasy usually begins among those who should be the safeguards against it — the religious leaders. There is great responsibility in leadership (see James 3:1).

Judah's Penitent Plea (5)

In this final section, Judah's deplorable condition, caused by her sins, is graphically summed up. She acknowledges that her only hope is in the everlasting Jehovah. The prayer is thus made: *"Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned: Renew our days as of old."*

It is a truism beyond dispute that when men turn away from God, He will turn away from them. His holy nature cannot tolerate rebellion (Habakkuk 1:13). His justice (Psalm 89:14) demands punishment. Happily, though, Jehovah is a God of tender compassion, and He is willing and eager to forgive those who yield to His divine will.

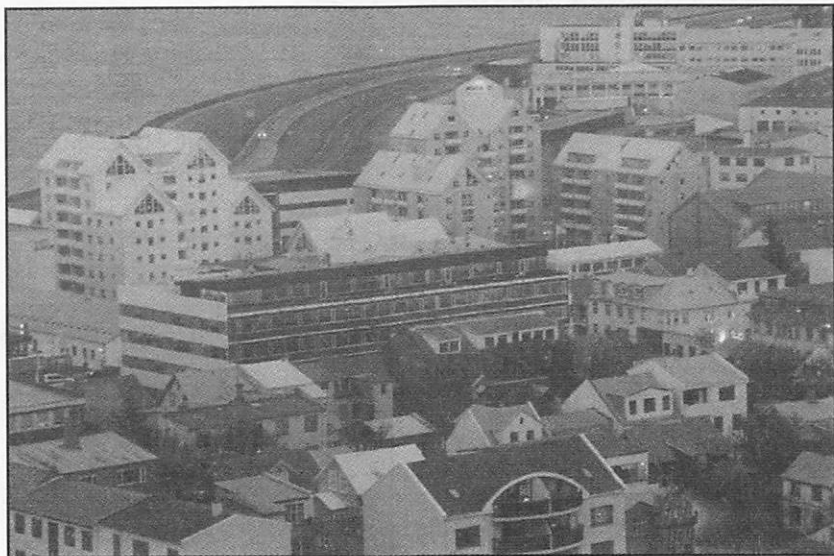
God did remember the Hebrew people. A half-century later, the restoration from Babylonian captivity was begun. The people came home again, and the temple was rebuilt. But preliminary to that, many hard, though valuable, lessons had to be learned by the Jews.

We too may profit by their experiences if we will but apply ourselves to learning of these ancient events (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; Romans 15:4). The book of Lamentations is rich indeed in divine lessons. †

Wayne Jackson is the editor of *Christian Courier* and is a preacher in Stockton, California, USA.

FROM THE HEART OF...

ICELAND



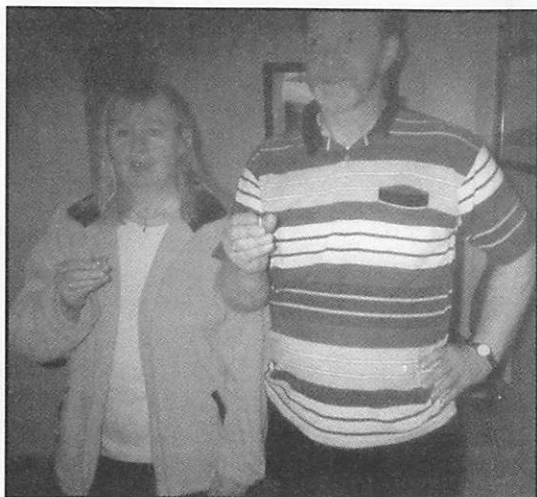
The capital city of Reykjavik.

Taking the Gospel to Iceland

Calvin Reneau

Iceland is an island nation with a population of 280,000. Its size measures 39,756 square miles or 103,000 kilometers. Most of the people live in the southwest corner of the island. Since it is a volcanic island, it has a large amount of geothermal activity. The natural hot water from the geothermal activity supplies the country with inexpensive and pollution-free heat and electricity. Most of the people live in and around the capital city of Reykjavik. Their economy is heavily dependent on fishing. The travel industry is fast becoming very important to the economy of Iceland. The

FROM THE HEART OF . . .



Marias — one of the first two to be baptized in Iceland — taught and converted his wife, Gyda, and their daughter, Svanhildur.

ence in the country only through the Naval Air Base just outside Reykjavik. Up until October of 2002 there were no members of the Lord's church that we knew of in Iceland.

In October of 2002, brother and sister Lynn Camp baptized Marias Sveinsson and Sigridur Hillmarsdotir into Christ — the result of studies the Camps had with them via the World Bible School web site. Since their conversion, the Camps have

returned twice to edify and encourage the new brothers and sisters in Christ.

In November of 2002, Dan Vines and I made a visit to Iceland. During that time, Marias and Sigridur showed an intense desire to study the Bible in order to grow as Christians. They had already been studying very hard to grow stronger in the faith, and had already begun to understand that Christians are to share their faith.

rest of the economy is divided between the farming and ranching of horses and sheep and various kinds of services industries. Iceland has a very high standard of living with a per capita income among the highest in the world.

Religiously, ninety percent of the people are members of the Evangelic Lutheran church. The church of Christ has had a pres-



Sigridur was one of the first Icelanders to obey the gospel.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

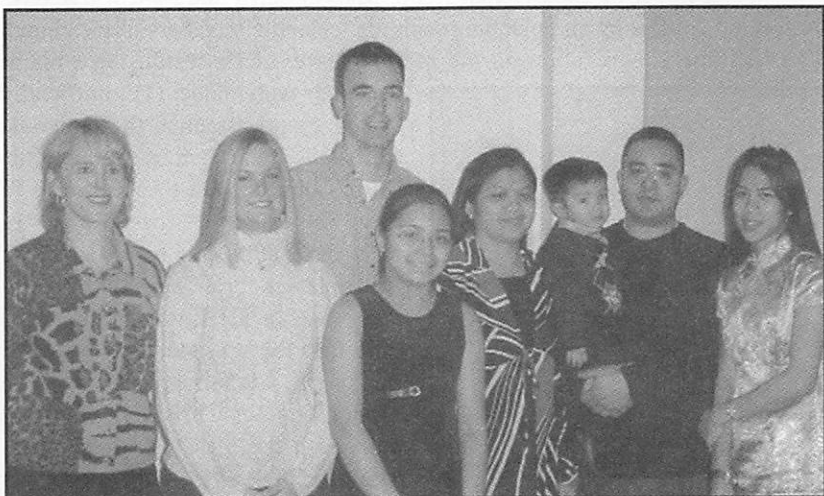


Calvin and Ann Reneau.

Since our visit, Marias' wife (Gyda) was immersed into the Lord. She obeyed after studying with her husband and me from May of this past year. In addition to Gyda's conversion, Marias has immersed one of his daughters, Svanhildur, and a friend of his, Hermordur. As of now, there are five Icelandic members of the Lord's church. More will be added because both Marias and Sigridur are studying with friends and relatives.

Marias is also searching out sites that would be suitable as a place to worship. They have asked us to conduct a crusade in Reykjavik. This effort will take place, the Lord willing, May 23-28, 2004. Pray that God will bless this effort with much success.

The local congregation is not our only involvement with the Lord's church in Iceland. We continue to be supportive of the small congregation which meets on the Naval Air Base. In July of 2003, I led a team of Christians from Georgia and Oklahoma to the base where they conducted a VBS.



Members of the military congregation worshipping at the Naval Air Base in Keflavik.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .



Calvin Reneau (left) with the newly organized church of Christ in Reykjavik. Demar Elam is on the right.

In December of 2003 Demar Elam, Marvin Serrit and I spent five days in Iceland conferring and planning with the Icelandic members of the church and with the congregation on the military base. As a result, three major

decisions were made: (1) to officially organize and establish the Icelandic Christians into a congregation of the Lord's church; (2) to set a time to have a crusade for Christ in Reykjavik; and (3) to have a series of Bible classes for all ages on the military base in Keflavik at the same time that the crusade takes place in Reykjavik. At this present time, we are looking for Christians who will help with the VBS and crusade in May of 2004. Please pray for this work. The soil is fertile. Come go with us. †



Dixie and Demar Elam.

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