

VOLUME FORTY-FIVE

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



Tsunami

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That I Can Pray

*I search among my treasures . . .
I must find the choicest gift of all
To bring to you today;
What can it be?*

*Not something that will break
Or crumble with the years,
Not words
Or even something that my hands
Have made for you alone . . .*

What can it be?

*Ah, yes . . .
With purest heart
And purest love
I'll go before our God,
Before His great and awesome throne
And, bowing there to worship
At His feet,
I'll breathe your name
And ask His care,
His special care,
For you throughout this day . . .*

*Sweet, sweet gift of love,
That I can pray for you!*

— Betty Burton Choate

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).



What Must I Do to Be Saved?

*Then Philip opened his mouth,
and beginning at this Scripture,
preached Jesus to him.*

*Now as they went down the road,
they came to some water.*

*And the eunuch said,
"See, here is water.*

What hinders me from being baptized?"

Then Philip said,

"If you believe with all your heart, you may."

And he answered and said,

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

So he commanded the chariot to stand still.

*And both Philip and the eunuch
went down into the water,
and*

he baptized him (Acts 8:35-38).

**The *church* is the *body* of Christ
(Colossians 1:24).**

Often today people think of
"the church" as the "good" people
out of all of the denominations.

In the first century,
no denominations existed.

Christians were commanded
to be united under *one name*
and *one doctrine*
(1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

**"Churches" were identified as
specific groups of people
living in *specific places*:**

"To all who are *in Rome*, beloved of God,
called to be saints" (Romans 1:7).

"The churches of Christ greet you"
(Romans 16:16).

"To the church of God which is *at Corinth*
(1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1)

"To the churches *of Galatia*" (Galatians 1:2)
etc. etc. etc.



DON'T BLAME GOD

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

While I was attending Freed-Hardeman College, a tornado struck a community nearby and two or three people were killed. Someone said that the reason the tornado swept through that area was because of the sinful living of those particular people. Someone else said that if God was punishing the people because of their sins, why didn't He hit some

place like New York City? The same could be said about cities, large and small, all over the world. Of course the point is, God is not directly sending tornados, fires, floods, snow storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, or other such things on the people of the world because of their wicked living. If He was using nature in such ways today, the world itself would have been destroyed a long time ago because, it is filled with sin and sinners.

But when tragic events take place, such as the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean, in which thousands and thousands of people are killed, survivors who have lost family members and loved ones usually ask, "Why? Why, God, did you send such a terrible thing upon us?" The same question was asked when four hurricanes recently hit Florida in the U.S.A. That question was also asked repeatedly when earthquakes hit Turkey, Iran, India, and other countries, causing the deaths of thousands when their small mud houses collapsed on them. Similar earthquakes have hit Japan and China, and people there wondered, "Why? Why me?" No doubt that same question was asked by those who suffered mud slides in California and floods in many parts of the U.S.A. this winter.

But tragic events of nature are continually happening around the world. Scientists explain: Mud slides occur *naturally* when rain weakens the structure of a mountain, releasing a muddy torrent on whatever may be in its path. Hurricanes and cyclones sweep over an area when the conflicting

energy of high and low air pressure, combined with hot and cool air masses, create rapid spiralling movement of the air over the ocean. Tornadoes form when warm, humid air meets cold, dry air in a twisting coriolis effect over land, spinning at speeds of 80 to 150 miles an hour. Earthquakes are caused by the shifting of tectonic plates along fault lines under the earth's surface. This crashing movement can turn whole villages into rubble in a matter of seconds. Volcanoes are the result of a build-up of heat and pressure in the hot, molten rock deep underground along tectonic plate lines. Magma finally breaks through the surface, spewing gas, steam, ash, and/or molten lava from the rupture. If the earthquake or the volcanic eruption occurs in the ocean, a seismic sea wave — a tsunami — may occur. This natural result of massive movements in the earth can create waves as much as 35 to 200 feet higher than normal, crushing and mangling everything in its path.

These terrible, catastrophic events are the effects of what we call the “laws of nature”. When natural conditions come together in predictable, specified ways, we can expect one of these powerful, destructive results — not as a direct act of God but because the earth's conditions demand it.

On the other hand, while nature itself is responsible for these tragedies, man is responsible for grievous things that come about as a result of wars, terrorism, robberies, killings, the misuse of drugs, hunger, polluted water, poverty, poor eating habits, etc.

However and whatever brings about hurt, pain, suffering, and death, never let the thought cross your mind, or to say to yourself and to others, that God is responsible. Listen, God created you and all human beings, and He loves you. He doesn't want to kill you. He doesn't want to hurt you or to cause you and your loves ones to suffer. He even gave His son to die for you so you can be saved in this world and in the world to come. John 3:16 says plainly, *“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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”*

Perhaps you have lost a wife, a husband, children, and other family members in some tragic natural calamity. This is heartbreaking, and we grieve for you in your loss. But be thankful that you have survived. Don't try to put the blame on others, and don't blame God, but be thankful that you are still living, and that there are many in your country and around the world, who are making great efforts to help you and others to rebuild your life. Be thankful that good can come out of tragedy, and that you can know the love of God and of caring humans in the midst of all the pain.

Although you can see God's creation all around you, as a testimony that

God lives, get yourself a Bible and read and study it to learn more about God and about His Son, Jesus Christ. Look for His words of love and reassurance. Learn to say with the psalmist David (Psalm 23),

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.*

Turning to God's word to allow Him to talk to you, you will learn of the Lord's sacrifice for you, and of what He would have you to do to be saved. He wants you to hear the good news of His Son, Jesus Christ, to believe it, to turn away from your sins, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. When you do these things, with a sincere heart of submission to God, He will save you and add you to His church, His spiritual family. Then as you live the Christian life and remain faithful to Him, you will be prepared to go to heaven when you die. In that new spiritual world, you will live with God and the redeemed forevermore. There will be no pain there, no sorrow, no sickness, and no death. "...we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Peter 3:13,14).

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'" (Revelation 21:3-5).

That is the kind of God we believe in and serve. He lives and we live because of Him. †



CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES CHANGE

Byron Nichols

It is a widely-accepted fact that there are a great many changes taking place today in what is generally referred to as “Christianity”. The call for significant changes of various kinds is being heard in the midst of

all varieties of church groups, from those commonly regarded as the very conservative to those which are acknowledged as being among the very most liberal, as well as those in between those opposite poles. Even some congregations among churches of Christ are involving themselves in some exceedingly divisive matters relative to beliefs and practices which up until very recent years were practically unheard of within the brotherhood.

In suggesting by the above title that Christianity requires change, it is not at all meant to imply or affirm that there should be any change made that would be in conflict with the Scriptures — not at all. The church is not *our church*. We are not the head of the church. We have not been given any authority over matters of doctrine. If we believe the Bible, we have to accept the principle that we as Christians are not in a position to change anything that is found in the Bible. We are not masters — we are only servants. Our responsibility is the same that Jesus identified for Himself when He said that He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him (the Father) who sent Him (John 6:38). Even in the midst of His awful turmoil and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus stared brutality and death right in the eye and prayed to the Father, “...*nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done*” (Luke 22:42). As disciples of Christ, we are called upon to also make these sentiments our own. Thus, we are not in a position to do things to suit ourselves, but rather to do things to suit Him! Our task is to please, not to be pleased!

In spite of all these introductory observations, it still remains a biblical

fact that becoming and living like a Christian absolutely **requires** change on our part, a lot of change. We **must** change extensively in order to qualify as one of His faithful.

Notice the fact that drastic change on the part of Christ's followers was required from the very beginning of the church. When Peter preached his convicting sermon in Acts 2, many of the hearers were made to feel their guilt, and they wanted desperately to be made free from their sins. In response, Peter informed them in no uncertain terms that they must make changes that would completely change their lives — the first thing that he told them was that it was necessary that they **repent** (verse 38). This meant that they had to be much more than merely sorry for what they had done; they had to do an about-face, changing to complying with the will of God rather than doing their own will. Verse 41 shows us that approximately 3,000 of those folks developed a severe conscience problem, to the extent that they made the commitment to make major changes in their manner of life. They were willing to change (repent) and be baptized, as Peter commanded. The true Christian of any day and time was/is one in acceptance of the fact that being a Christian is a momentous decision, one resulting in putting behind the old way of life and taking on a new set of standards for thinking and behaving.

Of course, from the very beginning of the church there have been some who found that their commitment to Christ called for much greater change than was needed in the lives of some others. For example, in 1 Corinthians 6 Paul was dealing with some Christians at Corinth who were in need of making some important additional changes in their lives. They had started the Christian walk, but the apostle discovered that they had not fully comprehended the principle of repentance — he could see the presence of major problems in their thinking and actions. However, to the credit of some of them, Paul says that though they had previously been what most of us would readily classify as “gross sinners”, they had successfully undergone the initial changes required in becoming a follower of Jesus. They had come a long way, but they still had a long way to go in making the continuing necessary changes that would result in their spiritual maturity in Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

True Christianity makes people willing to make the needed kinds of changes. It makes truthful folks out of liars; it transforms the lazy into industrious workers; it changes the aimless into people of purpose, etc., etc.

May we all be or become people of the right kind of change, ever changing into more and more the kind of servant that our Master expects and will honor one day. †

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We Need to Know God

Shan Jackson

When Paul traveled to Athens he went there with one purpose — to bring salvation to the Grecian world. There he encountered certain philosophers who found delight in hearing new things from all over the world (Acts 17). They knew much, but they did not know God. It was not that they did not have the ability to know God, but that they had failed to begin their search for Him. In their attempt to know all the deities of the world, they failed to find the one and true Deity of all eternity. They knew much — but they did not know God.

There are people today who also know much. However, the world, by its own wisdom, will never know God (1 Corinthians 1:21). Therefore, God has supplied us with His Bible to support us in our quest to find Him and a knowledge of His will. There is no way of knowing Him without it.

Many today are just as ignorant of God as were the philosophers of Mars' Hill. And so the remedy for our ignorance is just the same as theirs. We need to be converted, to turn to the Lord of lords (Acts 3:19). We need to know much — we need to know God.

You see, none of us knows how to find salvation except through the Bible (Romans 10:17). Our feelings, emotions, and thought processes are most deceptive. As Jeremiah said, "*The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man to direct his own steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). We simply cannot risk the salvation of our souls by blind acceptance of man's teaching (Matthew 15:9). We must know God. We must know that the Lord has spoken. Remember, heaven and earth will pass away, but not His words (Matthew 24:35). We must know much — we must know God.

When this old world is wrapped in flames, the words of the Lord will survive. When death and decay have their names scratched and scarred on everything else, His words will remain. Above everything else they demand our careful and prayerful attention. They are the light and lamp by which we are guided (Psalm 119:105). They are the source of our spiritual understanding (verse 104). We must know God. †

Shan Jackson is the preacher for the church of Christ in Port Lavaca, Texas, USA.

There Was a Man

James Allan Francis

“More than nineteen hundred years ago there was a Man born contrary to the laws of life. This Man lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity. He did not travel extensively. Only once did He cross the boundary of the country in which he was born, and that was during His exile in childhood.

“This Man possessed neither wealth nor influence. His relatives were inconspicuous, they were not influential, and they had neither training nor education. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled the doctors; in manhood He

ruled the course of nature, walked upon billows as if pavements, and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His service. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him.

“This Man never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all other subjects combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. He never practiced medicine, and yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near. He never marshaled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot being fired.

“The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone, but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Though time has spread almost two thousand years between the people of this generation and the scene of His crucifixion, HE STILL LIVES! Herod could not KILL Him, Satan could not SEDUCE Him, death could not DESTROY Him, and the grave could not HOLD Him!

“This Man stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, feared by demons, as the living, personal Christ, our Lord and Savior.”

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“Truly this Man (JESUS) was — and IS — the Son of God!”

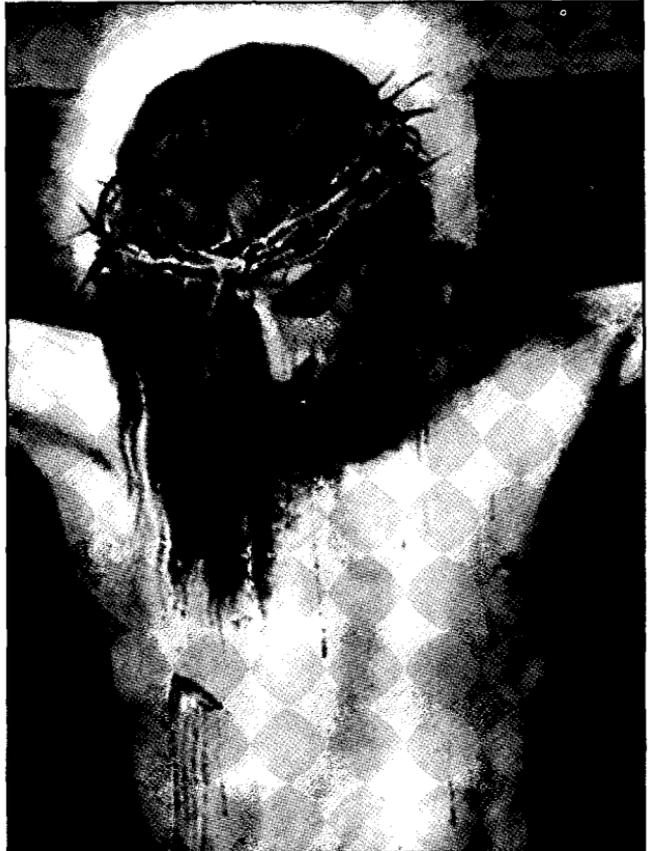
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).

Christ died on the cross for our sins, and His blood will cover us if we will believe and trust Him (Acts 16:31), repent of our sins (Acts 17:30-31), confess His deity before others (Romans 10:9,10), be baptized (immersed) in His name, and follow Him for the rest of our lives (1 John 1:7).

There was a Man — He IS Savior and Lord. Without Him we have no hope, but through Him we have the promise of forgiveness and eternal life. Will YOU trust and obey Him? †

Submitted by David A. Sargent, minister of the Church of Christ at Creekwood, Mobile, Alabama, USA.





The Resurrection of Christ

Stanley E. Sayers

From Patmos Isle we hear these words spoken by the resurrected, glorified Lord to the beloved disciple, John, "*Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death*" (Revelation 1:17,18).

Having risen from the dead, possessing the keys of death and Hades, what is the further meaning of Christ's supernatural resurrection?

#1. Satan has been defeated. In Genesis 3:15 we have the prophecy of the serpent's bruising the heel of the seed of woman (Christ), and Christ crushing the head of the serpent. We read in the Hebrew epistle that Christ took "*part of the same*", became flesh and blood that He might destroy the one who had the power of death, Satan, and deliver those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime "*subject to bondage*" (Hebrews 2:14). The Son of God was manifested to destroy "*the works of the devil*" (1 John 1:8).

#2. Death has given way to the resurrection from the dead. We are told in John 5:28,29 that all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God and arise. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus declared that He Himself

GOD

was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25,26). Then He raised Lazarus to prove it. 1 Corinthians 15:15,20-28, is the replete account of Christ in His own resurrection, and ours to come. Death has been conquered and the captives set free.

#3. Baptism is graced with meaning. Romans 6:3,4 is pure gold. We die to sin in repentance, and we bury the past life of sin in the water of baptism. In the likeness of Christ's death, we are buried with Him in death: our eyes are closed and one displays all the characteristics of being physically dead, but for the beating of his heart. Arising from the liquid grave, the first breath one takes is in the Kingdom of God! Dead to the world of folly and sin, alive to righteousness in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-10 et al.).

One has died to sin in repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30), and buried the past life of sin in the grave of baptism. Baptism is immersion, and neither the original Greek nor English translations will render it as sprinkling or pouring.

One rises from the waters of cleansing (Acts 16:22), and pledges complete obedience to Christ, his Lord and Master, becoming a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-11), born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). His name is now written in the Book of Life (Acts 2:41,47; Hebrews 12:23; Philippians 4:3b; Revelation 20:15).

In water baptism, the precious Holy Spirit takes up residence in the new convert's heart (Acts 2:38,39; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20), where the Father and the Son both make their abode through the Spirit (John 14:21-23; Ephesians 2:22). Joy "*unspeakable and full of glory*" are the experience of being born anew (1 Peter 1:8,9); "*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*" (Isaiah 12:3). "*For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*" (Isaiah 44:3). What a joy to find Jesus and keep His commandments! (John 14:21ff; Revelation 14:13)!

#4. The power of God is manifest. "*And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (Romans 1:4).

#5. Life takes on genuine meaning.

(A) Jesus said, "*Because I live, ye shall live also*" (John 14:19).

(B) "*He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live*" (John 11:25).

(C) "*Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal*

GOD

life, and I will raise him up in the last day” (John 6:54).

- (D) *“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:56).*
- (E) *“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (John 6:57).*
- (F) *“This is the bread which came down from heaven, as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever” (John 6:58).*
- (G) *“I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).*
- (H) *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44).*
- (I) *“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).*

#6. A personal nearness to God otherwise unobtainable.

(A) Sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2).

(B) “The enmity” (Ephesians 2:15,16). He has abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances (the law of Moses), and has made in Himself of two one new man, thereby making peace, and reconciling both unto God *“in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”*

#7. He wants to bless our lives. *“But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7).* Ascending up on high, he *“led captivity captive”* and gave gifts to men. Having ascended, what is it but that He first descended (the tomb), and has ascended up *“far above all heavens, that he might fill all things” (v. 10).*

#8. Risen and ascended; He is coming again! *“And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12).* John concludes, *“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).*

What does the resurrection of Christ mean to you? It means all the fore-going to me and far, far more. God hasten the day when incomprehensible glory shall burst in the skies and our precious Lord and Savior shall come with an innumerable company of angels, to gather His people to that eternal inheritance with Him! †

Stanley E. Sayers is a preacher and writer living in Duncan, Oklahoma, USA.

Realize the Unlimited Love of God

Samuel Osei Young

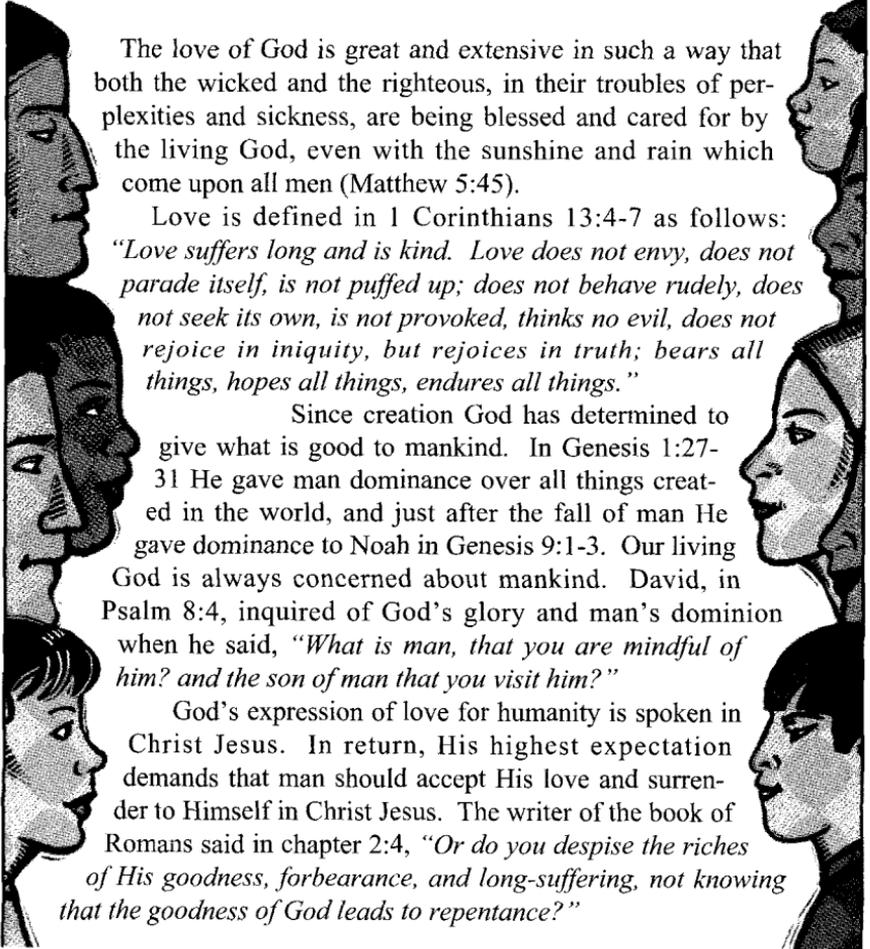
"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

The love of God is great and extensive in such a way that both the wicked and the righteous, in their troubles of perplexities and sickness, are being blessed and cared for by the living God, even with the sunshine and rain which come upon all men (Matthew 5:45).

Love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as follows: *"Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth; bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*

Since creation God has determined to give what is good to mankind. In Genesis 1:27-31 He gave man dominance over all things created in the world, and just after the fall of man He gave dominance to Noah in Genesis 9:1-3. Our living God is always concerned about mankind. David, in Psalm 8:4, inquired of God's glory and man's dominion when he said, *"What is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man that you visit him?"*

God's expression of love for humanity is spoken in Christ Jesus. In return, His highest expectation demands that man should accept His love and surrender to Himself in Christ Jesus. The writer of the book of Romans said in chapter 2:4, *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance?"*



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Indeed *“the Lord is not slack (slow) concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). God wants to save us, giving us life eternal in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 3:36).

In Matthew 18:1-4 the disciples wanted to know *“who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”* Jesus called a little child to Him and 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.”* Children are fit for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:13,14), because they are innocent. When children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, the disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them: For of such is the Kingdom of heaven.”*

The prophet Ezekiel made mention of the sinless state of children, that they do not inherit sin (Ezekiel 18:4). *“Behold, all souls are mine, the soul of the father, as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul who sins shall die.”* Children are in a

pure state until they are mature. *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8). *“Be ye holy, as it is written, I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16).

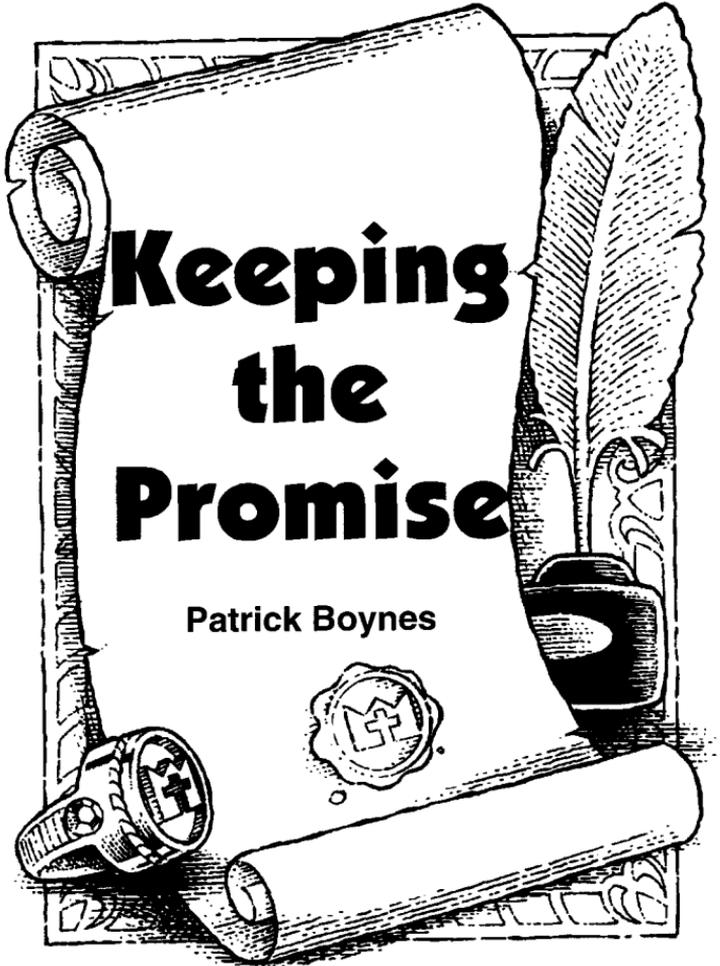
God could desire to adopt only children for His kingdom, but He did not do that. Rather, He wants the sinner to repent and be saved (Luke 24:47). In Matthew 3:8,9 John the Baptist declared, *“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”* Jesus said, *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Listen again to Jesus in John 10:10, where He says, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.”*

Conclusion: My dear reader, embrace the love of God, which caused the death of His only begotten Son, that whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). Those who are being saved through obedience to the Gospel are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). †

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

Y o u know that she had to be special for him to have spent so much money on her. When the most he'd ever bought for a n y o n e before was a tee shirt f r o m Blackpool, a seven diamond ring was really going to the o t h e r extreme. And it wasn't only the money. It was the selfless way he had asked her to be his bride — he'd put his money where his mouth was.

The ring was his word. It was the best way he knew how to say that his intentions were both loving and honourable. He had made a promise he planned to keep. If he had given the ring, then he would



later give himself. It was his guarantee.

When John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, he told of One greater who would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus departed this earth He told His

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followers that He would send the gift — His Father had promised, the one they had heard Him speak about. When Peter stood up on that memorable day of Pentecost, he told the people how that the resurrected Jesus had poured out the promised Holy Spirit which He had received from the Father, and that the promise was for them, their children, and for all whom the Lord would call. And when Paul writes to the Ephesians he speaks of being marked in Christ “*with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*”

The Scriptures repeatedly insist that God is a keeper of promises. Men of faith, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel and many more would readily testify to God’s faithfulness to His word. When God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him, He is fulfilling a promise — He is keeping His word.

But more than that, when God gives His Holy Spirit, He is providing a guarantee to fulfill all the other promises He has made. The Holy Spirit “*is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*” (Ephesians 1:14). He is “*in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come*” (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). Where each of these verses use the word “deposit”, Paul uses the Greek word *arrabon* — a word used in the ancient business world for a pledge

or down payment assuring the subsequent payment of the full amount. And, significantly, it is a word which the modern Greeks use for an engagement ring.

If we have the Spirit of God living within us, we have assurance of “*the promised eternal inheritance*” (Hebrews 9:15), “*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade*” (1 Peter 1:3,4). It is not a matter of I’ll be going to heaven if I’ve been good enough or if I’ve attended church meetings. It is rather a matter of I’ll be going to heaven if I have the Spirit of Christ within me. If God has given us His Spirit, He will also give us our inheritance.

And when God comes to invade our lives with His presence, He doesn’t come with a suitcase. He comes with a removal van and plans to stay. And He’s not like a tenant who is willing to put up with that ghastly wallpaper until it is time to move on to the next place — God has plans to redecorate and remodel us to His liking and by His Spirit. The abiding presence of God within the life of every true believer is a constant assurance that our hope is real and everlasting. If He has given us His ring, then He will give us His all. †

Patrick Boynes preaches for the Eye Church of Christ in Petersborough, England.



Do You KNOW God Exists?

Ed Allen

Let me ask you a few questions I have been forced to ask myself these last few months, “How strong is your fundamental Bible knowledge? Do you **know** God exists? If your friend, coworker, family member or your neighbor asked you to **prove** God exists, could you do it? Do you **know** the Bible is God’s message to man? Or has your knowledge of these facts been torn at, worn away and eroded to the point where maybe the Bible is just a ‘good book’?”

Does God exist? How’s that for question number one? A great question. God most assuredly exists, and we should be able to prove it to any and all who would ask us to do so! The Bible is His message to us and to all mankind, and that is a **proven fact** that is indisputable by any rational being. Let me stop here and define what I mean by “rational”. By “rational” I mean someone who has the ability to reason. A person may be rational and still arrive at a wrong conclusion because of poor judgment or a lack of information upon which to base one’s conclusion. However, when one can arrive at a conclusion using logic and reason, that person is said to be “rational”.

Now, does God exist? This is a question man has asked since our very beginning, but it is a question one can answer rationally. It was Descartes

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who said “*I think, therefore I am.*” That is just a fancy way of saying “we exist”. Man is here. Do you know anyone who believes that we do not exist? We aren’t talking about God, yet just us. Rational people will admit that they exist. If we *are*, there must be something or someone that caused us to be.

Consider Stonehenge. Stonehenge is a pile of rocks arranged in such a way as to indicate intelligent design. Have you ever heard anyone imply that Stonehenge just happened? That those rocks are where they are by accident or chance? Nope. No rational person would ever suggest that pile of rocks was placed there in that particular way by accident. Something as simple as a pile of rocks can indicate a designer, a maker, a creator. Yet, here we sit in our houses which we would never believe could have just happened, reading this article under artificial light which could not have possibly occurred by chance, taking advantage of two eyes and a brain that many people would suggest we obtained as sole recipients of the luckiest roll of the cosmic dice **ever**. *It just happened*, you see. Pure, dumb luck!

A house could never happen by chance, not in a **million** years. A car? No way. Your cell phone? Please! But you, your *eyes, brain, lungs, skin, heart*, etc. — these fantastic tools could have happened just by pure coincidence, dumb luck, blind chance! “Your need for a God Who created you makes you irrational,” our society says. “We can’t teach kids about God. God is too far-fetched. He’s preposterous! Instead, we’ll tell them we ‘evolved’ over **million** of years. “ Yeah, that’s **much** more rational.

You *think*, therefore **you are**. If you are, then you were made. If you were made, then there exists a **maker**. If you were created, then there exists a **creator**. If you were designed, then there exists a **designer**. This rational thought process is true of your house, your car, your furniture, your clothes, all of your belongings — and it is true of **you**. You exist, therefore there is One who caused you to exist. Logical, reasonable, rational, simple, and — above all else — **true!**

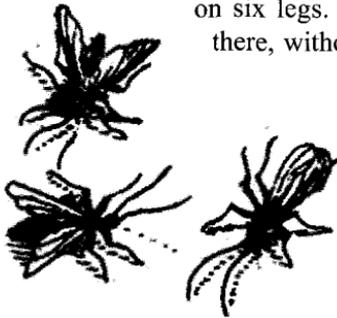
In this article we did not use the Bible to prove a **maker** exists. If you have a friend who doesn’t believe in God, he certainly doesn’t believe God wrote the Bible. Therefore, using the Bible to prove to your friend that God exists is futile. But if your friend can use logic, He should have been able to follow this line of reasoning to its logical end, and he should have concluded: **There is a God!** †

Ed Allen is a preacher of the Gospel.

Insect Life: Evidence of a Creator

Hugo McCord

A tiny, frail, land-bound maggot, able only to wiggle, somehow transforms itself into a skillful flying machine, complete with antennae, gyroscopes, and wings. The pilot in that remarkable airship, flying faster than the eye can follow, executes a half-roll and lands upside down on the ceiling on six legs. From there, without the



use of a runway, he can take off instantly. Helpless scientists can no more explain the change from larva to pupa to adult than they can explain the fly's aeronautical ability. When they speak of inborn "blueprints" or of "instructions from the DNA", or "the DNA code script" they are saying they have gone as far as they can, and have no answer without using the name "God".

Another example among thousands is the cicada, often called "the seventeen-year locust". Cicadas have various cycles, with the longest being seventeen years. Almost exactly on May 24 each seventeenth year these insects climb out of a seventeen-year period spent some 18 inches, below the frost line, underground. When they emerge they are still encased in a



protective subterranean suit resembling plastic. After shedding the transparent suit, wings, never before used, but now

ready for a new life, are dried in the breeze.

After mating, the female, equipped with a sharp blade, cuts under the bark of a twig, deposits her eggs, and then cuts the twig three-fourths through. As a result, the twig dies, falls to the ground, and carries the eggs to the soil. Then the eggs hatch, and the larvae dig into the ground.

The adults live only about three

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weeks, and never see their offspring. What makes them operate so? Their defense from being eaten by birds is an unbearable noise, equivalent to that of “a pneumatic hammer or a subway train screeching to a halt in an underground station.” The intense noise damages eardrums, driving away birds and all other animal life. But some source gave the cicada a tiny muscle which automatically collapses his eardrum just before he “sounds off”. Scientists know how the muscle operates, but they do not know how it could have “evolved” in one springtime to allow one generation of cicadas to mate and to preserve the species, nor can they explain the inborn seventeen-year almanac which the cicada carries with him underground. †

Hugo McCord, now deceased, was a faithful preacher of the Gospel teacher at Oklahoma Christian University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.

The skeptic, David Hume, wrote:

“Anatomize the eye; survey its structure and contrivance; tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation. The most obvious conclusion surely is in favour of design” (Hume Selections, Charles W. Hendell, Jr., page 316).

The Psalmist, David, wrote:

“How precious are your thoughts for me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I count them they are more than the grains of sand. When I awake, you will be nearby” (Psalm 139:17,18).



Evolution: Where Is the Hope?

Steven Marias

While reading a magazine, I came across a "true or false" quiz. Question number 4 was this statement: "Human beings developed from earlier species."

The answer to that question being on page 20, I quickly flipped through the magazine, curious of finding a proven answer this time, but the answer read as follows: "True. It is broadly assumed by scientists that the human line of evolution split from apes around five million years ago and the modern human emerged around 100,000 years ago."

Alas. Here I am, ending up

with an assumption which is not only too abstract for a common mind to conceive, but it is also one which is lacking finality, offering no hope after the material existence. You could see in it much of the tenets of Epicurianism, a philosophy which had its roots back between the fourth and the third centuries B.C. The cosmology of Epicureanism is similar to that of modern materialistic evolution. The latter's "Big Bang" theory brings to mind the teaching of the former that the world began in a shower of atoms, some of which by pure

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chance, moved a trifle obliquely and collided with others, whereby these collisions produced other collisions, until finally the ensuing movement brought into being the present universe. It is evident that in such a world of chance there could be neither purpose nor design. There could not be, therefore, any final or absolute good. The highest possible good, they taught, was pleasure.

And just as Epicureanism was quite popular then, so is evolution today. It appeals to emotional considerations, for it supplies a philosophic justification for doing what most people do anyway — make pleasure the chief goal of life. It brushes aside all thought of sin or accountability at a final judgment, because it predicts neither purpose nor terminus for the present world process. Evolution is essentially anti-religious. If the world originated with matter and chance, no creative power was necessary. If chance dominates the outcome of cosmic affairs, there is no room for directive, purposeful mind.

It is evident that evolutionism has drifted to a point of no return, in that it has created for itself a powerful economic enterprise for its adherents. But, strictly speaking, where is their ultimate hope in eternity? They have none.

On the other hand, the hope of the Christian is unique! *“The Word*

became flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:14); *“...nor is there salvation in any other...”* (Acts 4:12). *“These things have been written to us that we may know we have eternal life...”* (1 John 5:13), and *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live”* (John 11:25).

The amazing thing is that the door to salvation is open to everyone at all times: to believe, to repent, to confess Christ, and to be baptized — and it is so, even to evolutionists!

So we need to soak our minds with the fact that evolution is a philosophy, only a theory, and, in any case, philosophy never depended upon a revelation from God. It has always assumed the potential adequacy of man to understand his own world and to decide his own fate.

But what about Christianity? *“Knowing this first, that no prophesy of scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophesy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 20,21).

“Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought many schemes” (Ecclesiastes 7:29; see also Genesis 1:27; 3:6,7). †

Steven Marias is a member of the church of Christ at Arusha, Tanzania, East Africa.

Verse Search

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

1. What did Paul declare to the council of the Jews? (V. 1).
2. What did the high priest command those who stood by to do to Paul? (V. 2).
3. When Paul realized that some on the council were Pharisees and some Saducees, what did he say? (V. 6).
4. A dispute followed, and then the Pharisees said what? (Vs. 7-9).
5. The dissension was so great between the two groups that the Roman commander was afraid of what? (V. 10).
6. The Lord said, "*Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have _____ for me in _____, so you must also _____ in _____*" (V. 11).
7. Some Jews bound themselves under an oath to do what? (V. 12).
8. What did they ask the chief priests to do, to aid their plot? (V. 15).
9. Who heard of the plot? (V. 16).
10. What did Paul do when he heard of the plot? Did he work a miracle to get himself out of danger? (V. 17).
11. When the commander heard of the plot, what did he do? (V. 22).
12. For Paul's protection, what kind of guard did the commander assemble? (V. 23).
13. What further instructions were given? (Vs. 23,24).
14. What did Claudius Lysias send along with Paul? (Vs. 26-30).
15. What did Felix tell Paul? (V. 35).
16. All of these events demonstrate how God *providentially* answers _____. See Romans 15:30-32 for corroboration, where Paul asked the Roman Christians to pray that he would be delivered from those in Judea who did not believe in Christ.

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

Can We Understand the Bible Alike?

R. C. Spears

The above heading is a misnomer. It is impossible for two people to understand anything and not understand it alike. We understand facts alike; we understand commands alike. It is **possible to misunderstand** a fact or a command, but our differences arise from our **misunderstanding** and not from our **understanding!**

There is a divine and inspired rule running all through the Bible that should be our guide in matters of religion. In Deuteronomy 29:29 we read, "*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*" Secret things belong to God; revealed things belong to us. Too many want to pry into the secret things, or to speak where the Bible does not speak, while they may have very little interest in the plainly revealed truths in God's word. Such is the perversity of human nature.

In 2 Timothy 4:1,2 we read where Paul charged Timothy to preach *the Word*. Timothy was not

at liberty to speculate on the Word of God, but to preach it. We are not to preach our opinions, but the Word. We need to spend more time preaching the Word and not so much time preaching *about* the Word. "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11).

All religious people are willing to wear the name "Christian". We do not divide over this name. We understand this name alike. Where does the division arise? It comes from introducing religious ideas foreign to, and unknown to, the Bible.

Heaven belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and all who get there will have done things in this life **His** way, and **not their own**. In John 12:48, Jesus said, "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.*" †

R. C. Spears is a Christian living in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, USA.

Are You a Berean?

Rod Kyle

The Bereans were noble truth seekers. Acts 17:11 records... *"They received the Word with eagerness, examining the Scripture daily, to see whether these things were so."* The apostle Paul commanded the Thessalonians to *"prove all things"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Can you prove your religion by God's Word, the Bible? To help you, I have suggested the following areas of investigation.

Your church's creed. Is it a document authored by an uninspired man or is it the Bible, written by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 15:9; 2 Peter 1:21)? In other words, **is Christ your creed** (1 Corinthians 3:1, Acts 4:12)?

Your rule of faith. Is it your church's credal statements, your opinions, some sort of consensus arrangement within your group, or **the Word of Christ** — Romans 10:17? Called the law of liberty in James 1:25, the Bible alone is the complete and sufficient guide (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:5-17) which we cannot add to or take from (Revelation 22:18,19).

Your church government. Does it comply with the New Testament pattern for the church, or exhibit the innovations and ecclesi-

astical structures of prominent religious groups? **Only Christ is the head of His church** (Colossians 1:18). Each autonomous congregation under Him is to be governed by bishops selected from amongst the members of that congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The deacons, evangelists, and members within the local church all serve under their oversight (Hebrews 13:17). Any religious organization that departs from this pattern has departed from the Word of God (1 Corinthians 4:6,17).

Your law of pardon. Souls were saved from sin in New Testament times through **God's law of pardon**. It was the same for all (Romans 2:11). All had to **believe in Jesus** as their Savior (John 8:24), **repent** of sins (Acts 3:19), **confess faith in Jesus** (Acts 8:37), and be **immersed in water for the removal of their sins** (Acts 2:38). Then, and only then, did **Jesus add them to His church** (Acts 2:41,47). How does this compare with what you are accustomed to seeing and hearing? Are you willing to be a Berean and search God's Word for yourself? †

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.

THE WORD OF GOD

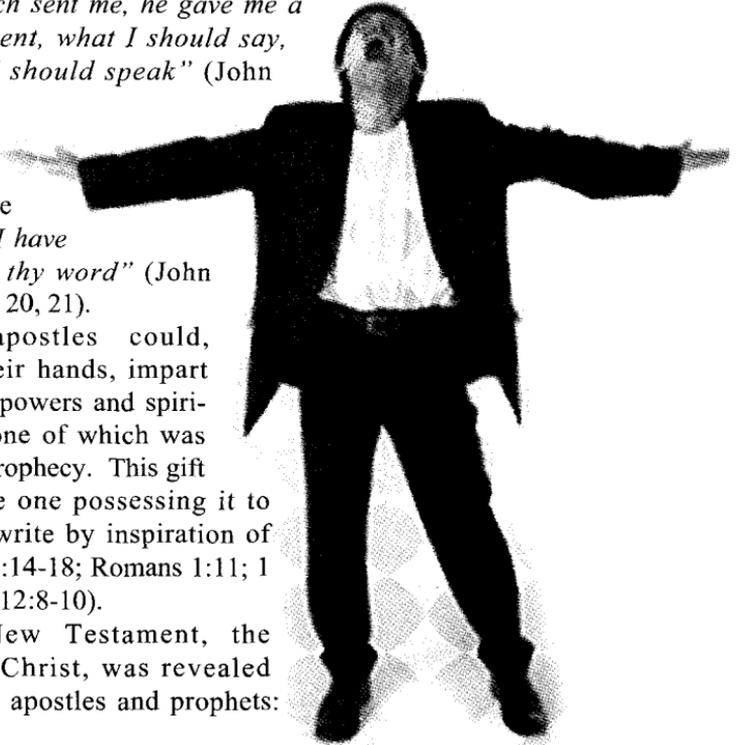
Much of the confusion in the religious world today has resulted from the fact that many (if not most) religious groups and their leaders claim direct present-day revelation from God. In contradiction and contrast to this claim, the New Testament of Christ claims to be God's full, complete, authoritative, and final revelation from God.

God gave His word to Christ: *"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"* (John 12:49).

Christ gave this Word to the apostles: *"I have given them thy word"* (John 17:8, 14, 17, 20, 21).

The apostles could, through their hands, impart miraculous powers and spiritual gifts, one of which was the gift of prophecy. This gift enabled the one possessing it to speak and write by inspiration of God (Acts 8:14-18; Romans 1:11; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

The New Testament, the Gospel of Christ, was revealed through the apostles and prophets:



Is There Present-Day Revelation From God?

Randy Kea

THE WORD OF GOD

"How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery...which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:3-5).

In addition, please note the following verses and the important affirmations found therein:

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but what he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that we have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1: 6-9).

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was need-

ful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3 ASV).

These irrefutable conclusions follow:

1. If Jesus was right about "*all truth*" being given to His first-century apostles, then any claim for present-day revelation from God is a delusion or a bold untruth. (Paul warned of such claims in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
2. If Jesus was wrong, then He is not the Son of God and is unworthy of our worship and service. Of course, it is our Lord who is right and not some so-called "television evangelist" who every five minutes claims that the Holy Spirit is revealing something to him.
3. If "*the faith*" (the Gospel) was "*once and for all delivered*" in the first century, then there is nothing to be delivered today.
4. Paul pronounces a "double curse" upon anyone who would preach something other than the first-century New Testament gospel that he preached. False prophets beware! †

Randy Kea is the preacher for the Lord's church in Forest Park, Georgia, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

2 Peter 2:20,21

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Peter's warning is directed to those who have **escaped**. — escaped *what?* worldly contamination.

Escaped *how?* through the **knowledge of Christ**. So **these people were saved!** But then he describes them as **having become entangled again and overcome**. When something is overcome, it has no power or strength left. This means that they were now **lost**.

Peter's observation is that their latter end is worse than the beginning. They were lost in the beginning, so the fact that their present state is worse shows that it is definitely possible for people to "fall from grace".

Many in the religious world emphatically deny that it is possible for a child of God to so sin as to be lost. They declare that God will keep what is His; that if a person does fall into sin, God will bring him out of it — or, if He does not, it means that that person was never saved in the first place.

This doctrine has no basis in the Scriptures. It is true that neither Satan nor any other outside force can wrest the child of God from His care. But God has always allowed humans the power to exercise their own free will. If a child of God *chooses* to leave His Father's care, he will not be forced by God to remain.

Reading through the New Testament, one repeatedly comes across warnings that the Christian must be on guard, lest he fall. Check out the Seven Churches of Asia, in Revelation 2,3. Note John's warnings in 1 John 1:7-10, 2 John 8-11.

The Right to Life

Bill Nicks

More than 40 million babies have been killed in the United States since the 1973 Supreme Court decision known as "Roe vs. Wade". This number is greater than the pop-

ulation of Canada and has been called the "American Holocaust". It is more than four times the number of Jews killed during the Holocaust perpetrated by Adolf Hitler.



A photograph circulated through the internet, of a 21-week-old unborn baby named Samuel Alexander Armas, undergoing surgery by Dr. Joseph Bruner, to correct spina bifida. **Is the tiny hand human?**

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Should we not all be shocked at the implication of *Roe vs. Wade*, which holds that unborn babies are *things* and not *persons*? This is more than a political question, for it violates the view which all Christians hold, namely, that life is sacred. When we accept the sanctity of life, we state that our morals are based on teachings found in the Bible and are theistic values, not evolutionary, or atheistic.

The glaring error behind “abortion” — *murder*, in a less-offensive word — is the belief that a baby is a mere glob of tissues. But this is not true. We cannot kill a human baby like we kill fish, cows, or other animals. The Bible opposes abortion, because we have a Creator (Genesis 2:18-25) who teaches us to respect life. *“Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man”* (Genesis 9:6). *“You shall not murder”* (Deuteronomy 5:17).

The same word (*brephos*), used in Luke 1:41,44 to refer to a baby in the womb — John — who *“leaped for joy”* (a “thing” could not “leap for joy”), is also used for a baby outside the womb — Jesus (Luke 2:12). To avoid the charge of killing a human being, those who believe in abortion usually refer to the thing killed as a “fetus”, and not a baby. Because they have pronounced it to be a mere glob of tis-

sues, it is acceptable to take the life of a baby, as they would kill an animal or a chicken or fish for human consumption.

Christians hold to the sanctity of life. The word “sanctify” comes from “hagios” and its derivatives and means holy, saint, or sanctified. This is the spiritual word which represents the theistic ethics found in the Bible. We are to regard human life as something different from the animal world. This is why we cannot murder a human being.

We are told that we are a *“holy priesthood and a holy nation”* if we are Christians (1 Peter 2:5,9), and we are to regard all others as sacred lives. God hates *“hands that shed innocent blood”* (Proverbs 6:17). When Israel *“mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works... they even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters...and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works”* (Psalm 106:35-39).

Can we stand by without lifting our hands in protest to this shedding of innocent blood? Does not the blood of countless innocent babies cry out to God, as did the blood of Abel (Genesis 4:10)? †

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and Trinidad and now lives in Hobe Sound, Florida, USA.

Traditions: Good or Bad?

Jimmy Jividen

To one person, religious traditions stimulate warm secure feelings. They are cherished, time-honored customs and a part of his religious heritage. He can sing with reverence: "Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to thee till death!"

To another person traditions bind religious beliefs and practices no longer relevant in our time. They are despised and should be discarded.

How should we regard traditions? Can we separate the good from the bad? The Scriptures speak of both kinds.

The religious traditions of men are bad. They do not come from God and must not be bound upon men. Jesus said that such traditions "invalidate the word of God" (Matthew 15:6).

Anything bound as religious law, or anything practiced as religious ritual that does not come from the authority of Christ in the Scriptures should be regarded as a tradition of men. Christ does not sanction it, and His church must not

bind it as law. These traditions of convenience or opinion would include whether or not to have church buildings, whether to use song books or to sing from hymns projected to a screen, whether to stand during prayer or to sit or kneel, and other such practices that can change with the times and circumstances.

On the other hand, religious traditions coming from apostolic authority are good. They come from God and are binding on men. These traditions are revealed in Scripture and exemplified by the apostles (2 Thessalonians 3:6,7). Paul encouraged Christians to... "*stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us*" (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

It is by these apostolic traditions that we know how to obey, worship, and serve God. We in the 21st century who desire to follow Jesus should examine our traditions to see if they are from God or man.†

Jimmy Jividen is a writer and preacher living in Abilene, Texas, USA.

Repentance and Confession

Frank Chesser

Repentance is incorporated as an integral part of the “*law of faith*” (Romans 3:27). Man’s choice is “*repent or perish*” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Repentance literally means a “change of mind” (Matthew 21:28,29), and it always leads to a change of life. John said, “*Bring forth fruit meet for repentance*” (Matthew 3:8). Jesus said the Ninevites “*repented at the preaching of Jonah*” (Luke 11:32). Their penitence bore fruit, for “*they turned from their evil way*” (Jonah 3:10).

Confessing Jesus as God’s son is an essential act of Gospel obedience. Paul said, “*with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*” (Romans 10:10). Prior to his baptism, the eunuch confessed, “*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*” (Acts 8:37). Regarding Jesus, the “*chief rulers also believed on him,*” however, their faith was not an obedient faith because “*they did not confess him*” (John 12:42).

Obviously, repentance and confession involve human effort. In these actions of faith man is *doing something*. He is *working*. James said, “*I will show thee my faith by*

my works” (James 2:18). The Ninevites expressed their faith in works of penitence, thus God “*saw their works*” (Jonah 3:10).

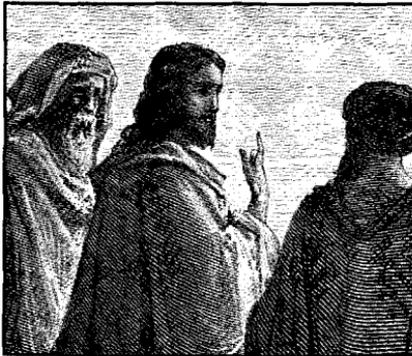
Clearly, repentance and confession are works, but what *kind* of works? Are they *works of merit* that nullify grace and make God a debtor (Romans 4:4)? Do they belong to the “*law of works*” (Romans 3:27) that substitutes *self* for God as the object of trust and leads to boasting (Ephesians 2:9) and self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-12)? God forbid! They are **works of faith** that belong to the “*law of faith*” (Romans 3:27), *in cooperation with divine grace*. Repentance and confession constitute *faith at work*, faith appealing to God for salvation through grace and blood.

Repentance and confession are inherent actions in the “obedience of faith.” The trust of this obedient faith is not in these specific actions of faith. The sole object of trust is God and God alone. In the obedience of faith, man appropriates the provisions of grace to his undeserving soul. †

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Panama Street congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Should We Follow the Laws of Moses or the Commands of Christ?

Roy C. Watson



Regarding the question in the title of this article, many of my WBS (World Bible School) students answer that they will follow both Moses and Christ. But, may we look at what God said about the subject? His answer is found in a short story in the book of Matthew. Many Bibles head it "The Transfiguration". The story follows:

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his

clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.'

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid.' When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus" (Matthew 17:1-6).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

God said, "Listen to him." "Him" is his beloved Son, Jesus. So God told people in a most forceful way to listen to Jesus! Why would He plainly instruct the disciples to listen to Jesus, as opposed to Moses or Elijah? Christ answered that question very positively in a paragraph of scripture that is headed "The Great Commission" in many Bibles:

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:16-20).

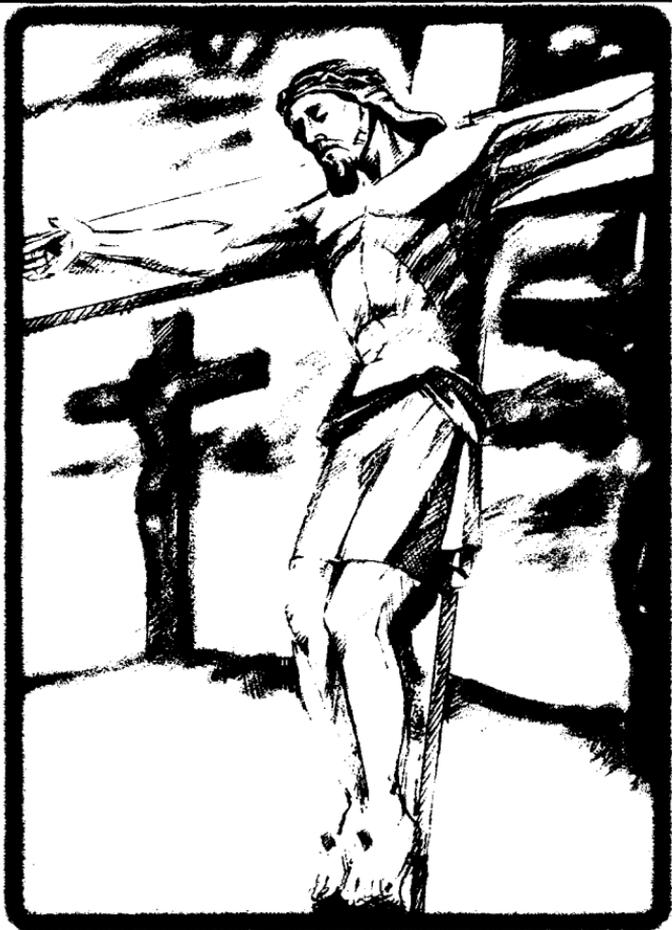
To whom do we listen in life? We listen to those in authority. For instance, as children to parents, then later to teachers, and yet later in life we listen to the police and governing authorities. However, in regard to our lives, before God, to whom are we to listen? Jesus said in the quote above, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."* If Christ has been given all authority, how much is left for Moses? None. We are to listen to Jesus Christ alone.

Christ declared, *"There is a judge for the person that refuses to believe in me and does not accept what I say. The message I have taught will judge that person on the last day"* (John 12:48). At the judgment we will not be judged by the message of Moses. We are to be judged by the message of Christ. He is the One in authority. Therefore, we should listen to and follow the commands of Christ. †

COMPARISON

MOSES	CHRIST
1) Human	1) Divine
2) Sinned	2) Sinless
3) Animals Sacrificed	3) Himself Sacrificed
4) Brought Law	4) Brought Grace
5) Servant over God's House	5) Son over God's House
6) Moses needed a Savior	6) Christ is Savior

Roy C. Watson is a Christian living in Jackson, Mississippi, USA, and working with World Bible School students.



He Is the Savior

Loy Mitchell

“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior” (Ephesians 5:23).

Christ, the Son of God, is the Savior, or deliverer. He is the one who can redeem men from sin. He paid the price which made salvation

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possible for all people. Without Christ, man would have no hope of being delivered from the bondage of Satan.

Most of those who claim to believe in Christ will state that they believe Jesus Christ is the Savior. They will usually teach that one must believe in Jesus in order to be saved. However, too many fail to see what the Word of God teaches about what or whom Jesus saves. So many fail to see the connection between the church and the Savior.

promise of your being saved. Some say: "Jesus our Savior we need, but the church we need not." Such statements simply are not true. The church cost Jesus His blood. That was the purchase price. "*Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28b).

Can a man be saved apart from the precious blood of Jesus? No, he cannot. Read Ephesians 1:7: "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in*

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to *the church*, which is *His body*, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22,23).

Look again at God's word. Christ is said to be not only the **head** of the church, which is His **body**, but He is the **Savior** of His **body**, which is the **church!** How could Paul be plainer? Jesus Christ saves the body, which is His church. Is there any promise in the Word that He will save something other than His body? No! He did not promise to save the church of Jones, Smith, or Mitchell. He is the Savior of **His** church.

This ought to destroy the doctrine that the church is not necessary. My friends and brethren, unless you are a part of the body of Christ, the church, there is no

accordance with the riches of God's grace." That blood which removes sin is the same blood which paid for the church. Unless I am a part of that body which was purchased by the blood of Christ, I have no hope of being saved.

When men and women comply with the terms of pardon laid down by God in His Word, they are saved (Acts 2:38). They are added by the Lord to His church, which is His body (Acts 2:47). Are you a part of His body? If not, obey Him today so that He will be your Savior! †

Loy Mitchell, missionary to Zimbabwe, now sponsored by the West Dyersburg Church of Christ in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

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"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Jesus never has greater appeal to a soul than He does on that person's deathbed. I have heard of atheists who renounced their atheism on their deathbed, but I have never heard of Christians renouncing their Christianity on their deathbed. If, at the time of death, we regret anything having to do

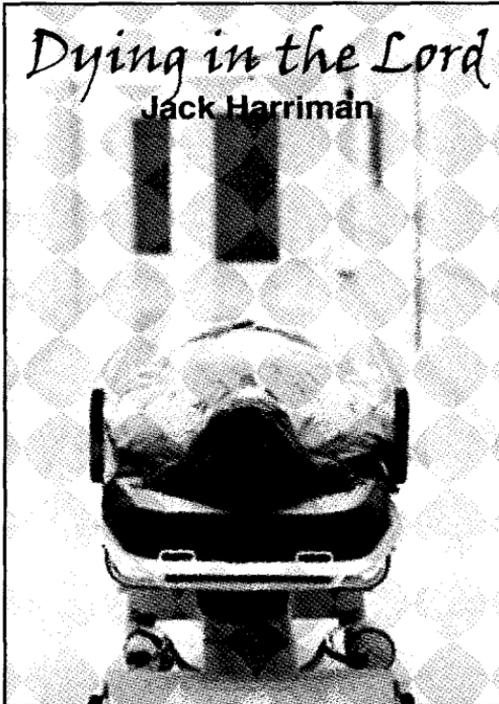
with Christ, it will be that we fell short of what we could have been and should have been. Our regret will never be that we loved God too much or that we invested too much time, effort and money into our Christian walk.

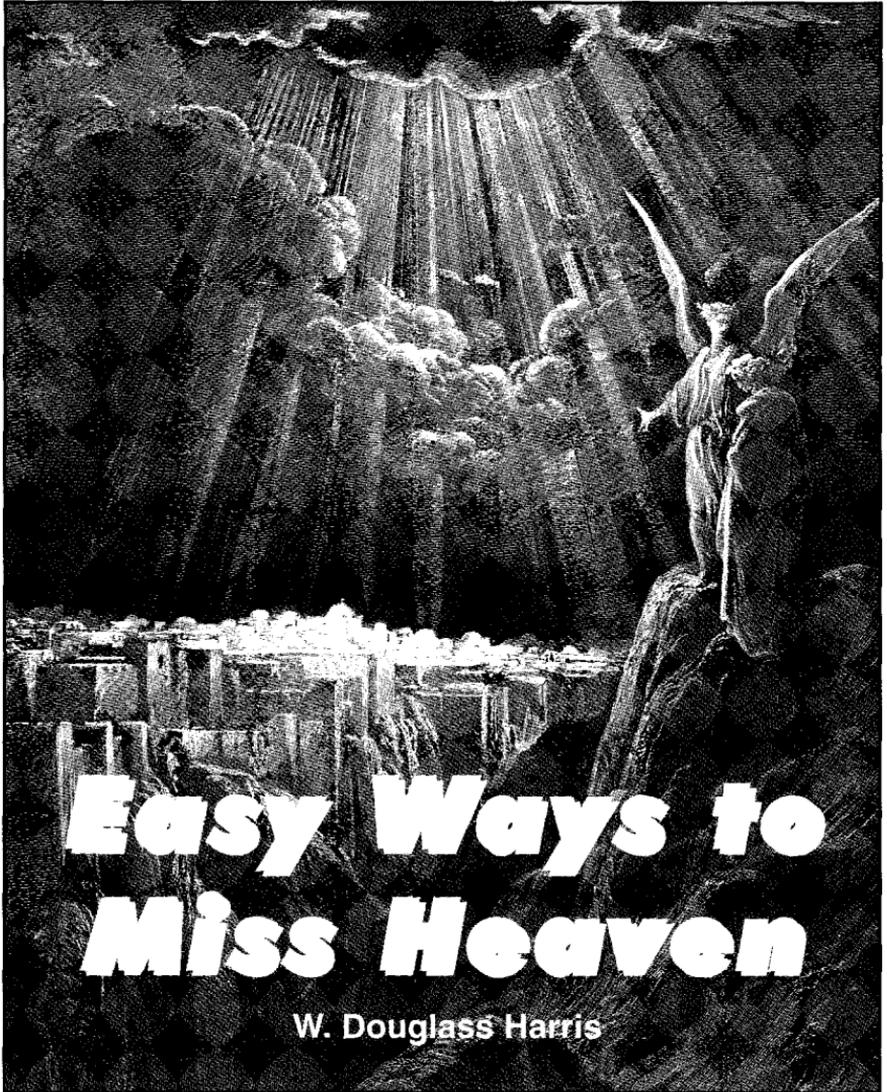
"Rest from your labors" is the blessed message we will hear. The Lord must have had older Christians in mind. The young know nothing of the struggle of older folks to keep body, mind, and soul together. Not only rest, but also recognition will be involved — *"Their works follow them."* Somebody knows and acknowledges all that has been done for His name and in His service.

There are only two places to die — in the Lord, or out of the Lord. Those who die in the Lord are blessed. Those who die out of the Lord are cursed. The only person who can **die** in the Lord is the person who **lives** in the Lord.

"For as many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). *"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10). †

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





Easy Ways to Miss Heaven

W. Douglass Harris

Mankind seems inclined to be interested in the easy ways of life, and perhaps there is no particular harm in this if we keep our priorities

in proper alignment. But easy ways *can be problematic and deceitful*. They can sometimes cause us to miss some of the most important lessons

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in life and eventually to miss heaven with all its beauties. Adjustments to difficult challenges in life are not easy, so people often miss the **best** by settling for the **easiest**.

Heaven Can Easily Be Missed

What will it mean to miss heaven? It will mean missing eternity with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the holy angels (John 14:3; 12:26); it will mean missing the eternal rest for which all mankind sighs (Revelation 14:13), and the New Jerusalem with all its beauties (Revelation 21:1-7). It will also mean we will spend eternity with the Devil and his angels in torment (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10; Mark 9:48), with all the evil people of all time (Revelation 21:8). Jesus warned that traveling the broad way is easy in contrast to the strait (difficult) way (Matthew 7:13,14).

What are some easy ways to miss heaven?

Infidelity

Infidelity or unbelief is one easy way to miss heaven. The writer of Hebrews refers to "*the sin which doth so easily beset us*" (Hebrews 12:1,2). What is this sin? The context indicates that it is the sin of unbelief. The writer had warned throughout the book against infidelity (3:12), which was the besetting sin of Israel.

When one does not study the Bible and seriously consider the evi-

dences supporting faith in God and in the Bible, a weak faith, and then a lack of faith, becomes easy (Romans 10:17). It requires mental effort to study the Bible and to weigh evidence, so many choose the easy way of unbelief, or faith without conviction.

Indulgence

Paul, by inspiration, said that Christians are not to conform to the world (Romans 12:1,2), which is another easy way to miss heaven. It is so easy to be a conformist and to travel the road of indulgence by yielding to peer pressure, succumbing to the pleasures and enticements of the sinful world, being caught in the pull of the under-current of worldliness. As one seeks for social acceptance, it is easy to travel this road.

There are frequent warnings in the New Testament against this way (see 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4). It requires no courage or character to go this route. Christ enjoins Christians to be good influences (Matthew 5:13-16), and if they fail, they are traveling the broad (easy) way that leads to eternal destruction (Matthew 7:13,14).

Indifference

Another easy way is suggested in the judgment Christ pronounced on the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-17). They were lukewarm, which made the Lord

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sick. It is easy to travel the road of indifference. Jesus warned against the futility of doing such (see Matthew 7:21-23). In this passage He portrayed souls arguing with Him at the judgment as being honest and sincere, but too indifferent to search for the right way.

It requires effort to study and to learn the saving truth as distinguished from damnable error; to make God-approved choices, etc., so men excuse themselves from the responsibility and appease their consciences. But they need to remember where this way leads.

Inactivity

In the letter to the church at Sardis, another easy road is suggested by Christ (see Revelation 3:1-4). Those Christians had a name that they lived, but the Lord said that they were dead spiritually. This suggests inactivity — *they were not doing anything in the kingdom!* This is the next step after indifference, of which the church at Laodicea was guilty.

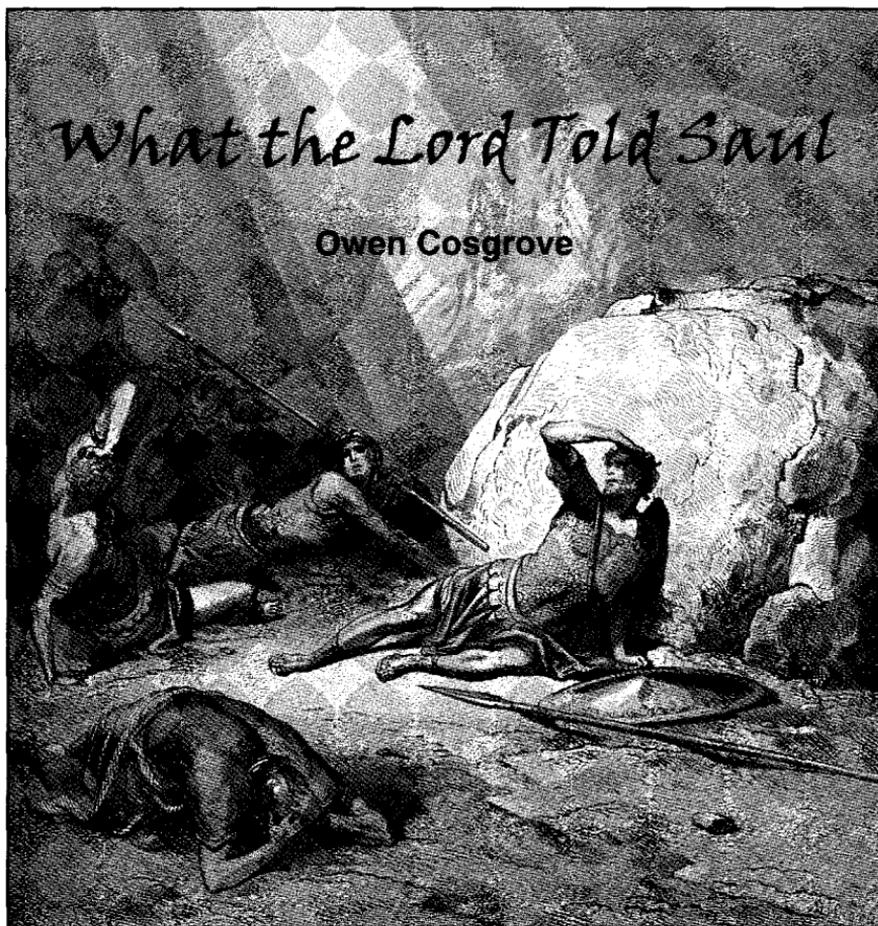
It is easy to salve the conscience with excuses for ourselves, to coast along in our spiritual lives, and not complete the course to win the crown of life. It is easier to relax at home than to exert the energy to serve, but we need to think of the eternal destiny of this course of spiritual inactivity in life (read Matthew 25:41-46).

Intentions

Another easy way to miss heaven is suggested by the writer of Hebrews when he said, "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*" (Hebrews 2:1-3). Neglect is a serious thing and often suggests intentions of doing good. People think that because their *thoughts* are good and they *intend* to do certain things, they are all right. Hence, with appeased minds they postpone service to God. Knowing and intending to do the right thing is not enough (James 4:17). It has been said that the way to eternal destruction is paved with good intentions. Mankind's greatest and most tragic spiritual danger is the simple nothingness of neglected intentions to do good. (Matthew 7:21-24).

Conclusion: Although these ways seem easy, they become difficult when the consequences are realized. Missing heaven will be the greatest tragedy that could happen to any of us. On the other hand, putting all our effort into gaining heaven will mean eternal life with God and the reunion with our redeemed loved ones. Everything! Just a knowledge of the rewards makes the way to heaven easy. †

W. Douglass Harris, now deceased, was a faithful Gospel preacher throughout his life.



The story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is one of the most exciting accounts in the New Testament, and certainly it speaks of one of the greatest events in the history of Christianity.

Saul's life (soon after he is called Paul, the Greek or Gentile form of the great Jewish name Saul) had a storied background. He was a

"Hebrew of Hebrews", a thoroughbred, one who could trace his lineage all of the way back to Abraham. His hometown of Tarsus was an important Roman city. He grew up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the foremost teachers of the Law of Moses.

Paul was a Roman citizen by birth. This rare privilege could be

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gained either by some great act of heroism, by paying a very large sum of money, or by being born to parentage who had Roman citizenship. Paul was one of the foremost young Jews at the time of Christ's death. He led in persecuting the early church. He was in charge of the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Years later he told King Agrippa, "*I thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (Acts 26:9).

When Paul got authority from the high priest at Jerusalem to go to Damascus and persecute Christians, the Lord appeared to him on the way (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8; Acts 9:17). Saul knew that he needed to do something to straighten up his life, and he asked what Christ would have him to do. The Lord told him to go to the city and there it would be told him what he must do.

It is well to note that God did not directly tell people what to do to be converted. In the case of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, Peter went to Caesarea to teach him the Gospel. In the case of Saul, God sent a disciple named Ananias. In every case of conversion in the book of Acts, faith came by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, through a human messenger (Romans 10:10-17).

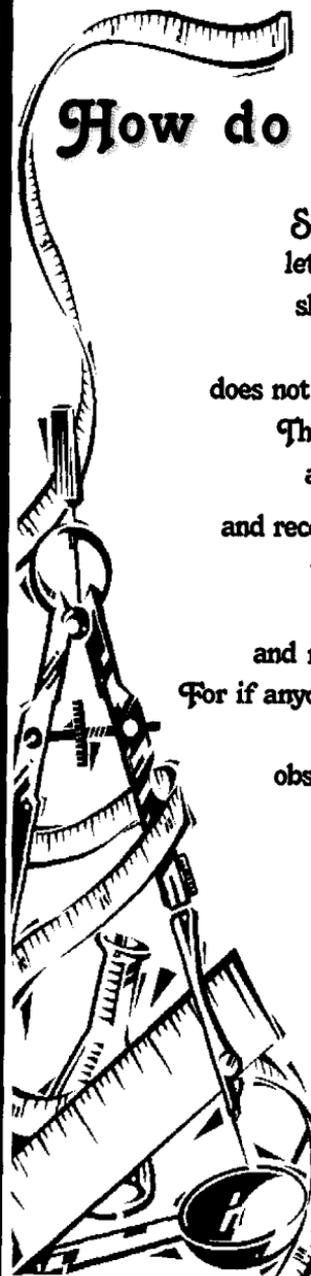
Ananias taught Paul the Gospel and commanded him to arise and be

baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). During the three days that Paul waited for Ananias' appearance, he fasted and prayed and was told by the Lord that he must suffer many things for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 9:15,16).

The rest of Paul's life story is a glorious expression of devotion to God and of unthinkable suffering for the faith that he preached and lived by. The Lord did not promise Paul a "rose garden" in this life. He took on the religion of Jesus knowing that it would cost him dearly and bring much suffering into his life.

So many times people look at Christianity, thinking only of what they can get out of it. Paul approached it knowing that it would cost him dearly, and he poured his life into it. He was willing to pay the price, and his example should inspire every Christian to bear the cross of Jesus joyfully, knowing what He has done for us. The Lord told Paul that he would suffer, and he was willing to lose all earthly things that he might gain Christ. Everything else was of secondary importance. That's what the Lord told Saul, and this is what He tells all of us (Matthew 6:33). †

Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and preaches for the Northside congregation in Waxahachie, Texas, USA.

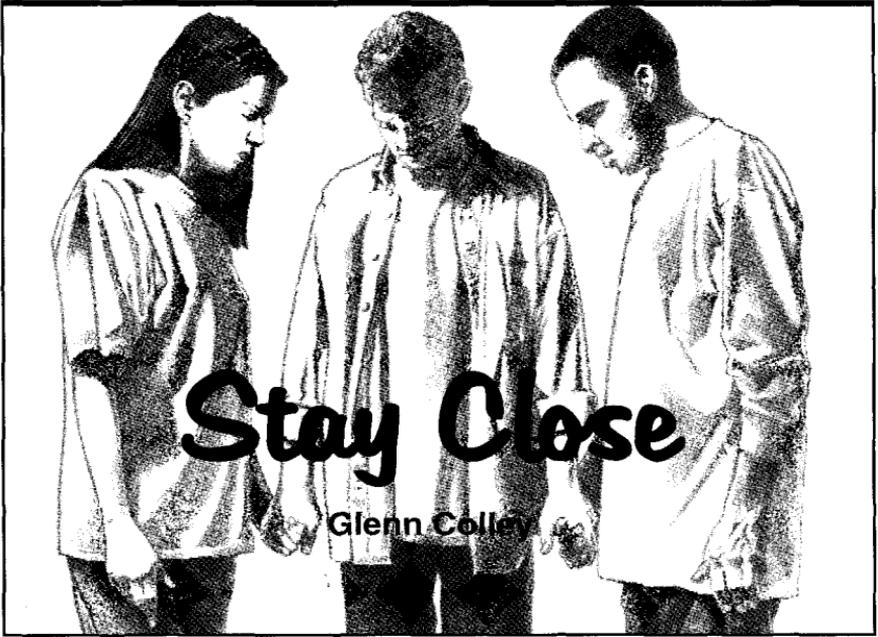


How do you measure up?

So then, my beloved brethren,
let every man be swift to hear,
slow to speak, slow to wrath;
for the wrath of man
does not produce the righteousness of God.
Therefore lay aside all filthiness
and overflow of wickedness,
and receive with meekness the implanted word,
which is able to save your souls.
But be doers of the word,
and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer,
he is like a man
observing his natural face in a mirror;
for he observes himself,
goes away,
and immediately forgets
what kind of man he was.

James 1:19-24

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Church members need to be close to church members. Anytime a Christian creates a distance between himself and the church, he is under a greater threat of falling away from the faith. Some folks prefer to not be too involved with the work of the church, choosing rather to fall somewhere between "visitors" and "members". They come on Sunday mornings to worship God, which is good in itself, but have little or no other interaction with the other Christians in the church for the rest of the week.

Take a valuable history lesson:

When the great nation of Israel prepared to cross Jordan and take

Canaan away from the enemies of God, and thus be blessed, two of the twelve tribes stalled.

"Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land...that, behold, the place was a place for cattle; The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this

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land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan” (Numbers 32:1-5).

The request regarding cattle sounded reasonable, as do most arguments which excuse compromise, but it was compromise none the less. Their real loyalty should have been to God’s people.

In other words, they said, “We like it here in the suburbs of Canaan. You all go in and fight all the battles of Canaan, and we’ll just be content to build our houses here.” Moses said, “No Way! Shall your brethren go up and fight while you sit here in comfort? **No.** You come fight the battles of Canaan, and then if you choose, you may come live here in the suburbs of God’s Canaan land.”

And so they did. Weren’t they like some Christians today who are half-hearted in their loyalty to the Lord’s church?

Let’s look at another scene, after many years have passed. Israel has had times of great faith and obedience, but many more of idolatry and disobedience. Ultimately, a divided Israel would fall into the hands of the idolatrous enemies, Assyria and Babylon, because of their worldliness in bowing to the gods of the heathen. That fact is widely known. But I want you to see something else. Which tribes in Israel went down first? We

see in 1 Chronicles 5:25,26 that it was Reuben and Gad:

“And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.”

As history progressed, it appears that they bowed first to the gods of the nearby peoples; and now they are the first to go into captivity. Half-heartedness in the united work of God’s people always seems an easy way to be religious, but it costs, not pays.

The solution is to **grow out of it!** Never be satisfied with keeping your distance from the activities of the Lord’s church. Attend all the services of the church. Find a good work you can enjoy doing, and get at it. Take advantage of opportunities to be around other Christians.

Be close, stay close, and let’s help each other go to heaven. †

Glenn Colley preaches for the West Huntsville Church of Christ in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.

What Effect Do I Have on My Brethren?

Maxie B. Boren

A question which every Christian needs to ask himself is, "What effect do I have on my brethren?" This is an important inquiry for each of us to make, because the Bible has a great deal to say concerning individual responsibility in the matter.

For an example: a harsh, judgmental attitude toward others over inconsequential matters can be a causative factor of someone stumbling and falling, spiritually. Therefore, the apostle Paul urged Christians **not** to put a stumbling block or an occasion of falling in a brother's way (read Romans 14:13). Further, he instructed that Christians refrain from anything that would cause a brother to stumble (verse 21). Jesus declared, "*Woe unto the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes*" (Matthew 18:7 NASV).

Instead of creating stumbling blocks to "trip someone up", would you agree that the cause of Christ would be much better served if we

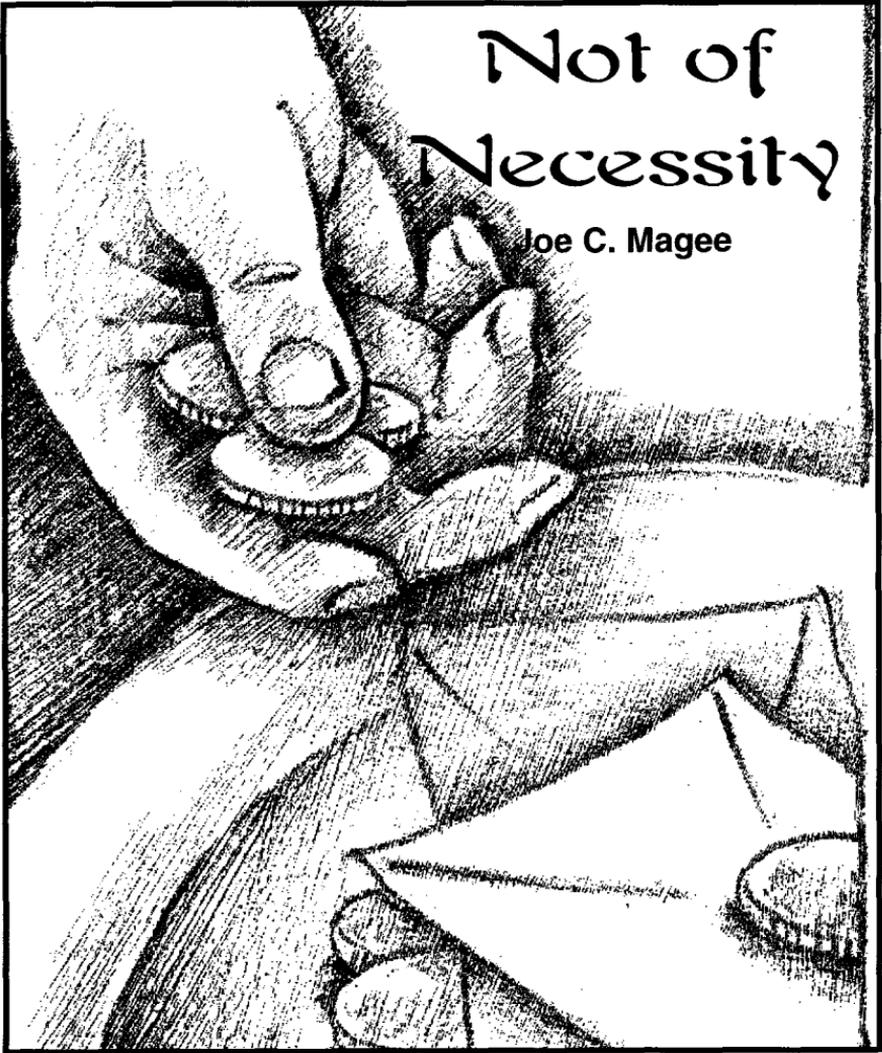
each one would try to make the pathways of others a little bit smoother? Philemon was such a man as that, because the apostle wrote to him and said, "*I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother*" (Philemon 7).

What kind of an effect do I have on other brethren? That is an inquiry each of us needs to make of himself/herself. Ask, "Do I spread gloom and doom in the church by a bad attitude, or do I spread joy and sunshine by a good attitude?" And further, "Am I busy paving life's road to make it better for others, or do I specialize in causing problems by fashioning stumbling blocks along the way?" Diotrophes was apparently in the latter category and was of such a disposition that specialized in casting folks out of the church instead of helping them to be fruitful and productive; and thus, the apostle John indicted him for his attitude (3 John 9-11). Think about it. †

Maxie B. Boren is a gospel preacher for the Church of Christ in Bedford, Texas, USA.

Not of Necessity

Joe C. Magee



My experience with the subject of giving could be called a paradox. For years as a young husband and father, struggling to support a growing family, I would resist, even become upset every time the subject

of giving came up. I readily admit that part of the problem was that I knew that I was not giving to support the cause of Christ as I should. But there was another problem.

So many times when the end of

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each year was approaching, the preacher would be asked by the elders to preach a sermon on giving. At times the sermon would be based upon the budget which the elders had apparently already prepared. At other times, they would approach the subject apologetically. On one occasion the preacher even apologized, saying, "I promise not to touch on this subject again this year."

I began to study the subject of giving from a biblical standpoint. I immediately recognized that we were creating an attitude of necessity, which is exactly what the Bible teaches **not to do**. "*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

What constitutes a cheerful giver? Do you remember the first time you had an opportunity to give a gift? What prompted that action, if not love? Love for a mother, father, friend, or sweetheart makes the giving of a gift an exciting and cheerful act. How different from giving out of a sense of obligation.

We should be reminded that we serve a loving and giving God. He gave us life. He gave us a beautiful world in which to live. He gives the strength and resources to supply our needs. Most of all, He gave us His Son to die for our sins; and He gives us the opportunity to share with oth-

ers our bounty.

This is the opportunity which Paul deals with in his letter to the Corinthians. The saints in Jerusalem were in great need. Paul writes of how those in Macedonia responded to this need. "*Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality*" (2 Corinthians 8:1,2).

Note how closely joy and liberality are tied together. And then as Paul admonishes the Corinthians to be prepared, he writes, "*Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation*" (2 Corinthians 9:5). Notice the words "generous", "previously promised", and "not as a grudging obligation." I get the impression that these brethren were excited about the opportunity to help even those whom they did not know, and yet those who were of like precious faith.

What prompted this enthusiasm among the Macedonians? We find the answer in verse five of chapter eight: "*And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves*

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to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." Of all the gifts we may offer, none can compare with the one for which our Lord yearns the most: **ourselves**. "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me*" (Matthew 16:24).

Let me share with you a method that has been used with surprising results where I have served. First, the leaders would determine to let the congregation set the budget. In order to do so, they would set forth proposals concerning the work of the church. Two months before the budget would go into effect, a series of lessons on giving would be presented. These would be Bible-based and not budget-centered.

Following this, the congregation would be asked to search their hearts and determine what they would give over the next year, and would give that much over the next three Sundays. Why three Sundays? This would determine an average and would allow for any casual giving by visitors to the services. The average

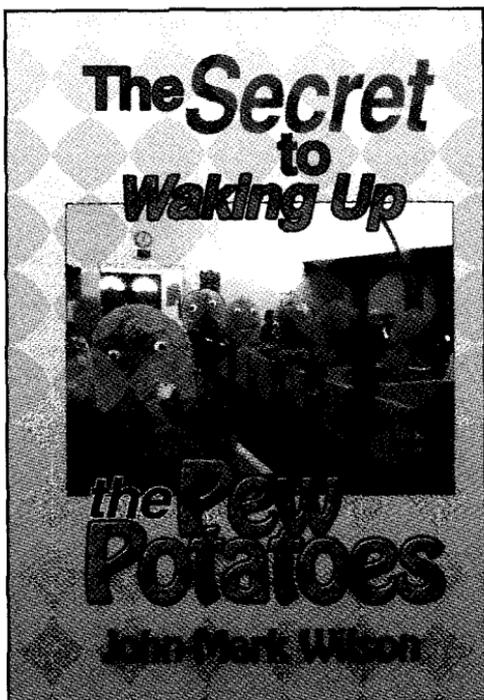
of these three Sunday contributions would then serve as a basis for what the leaders could determine they would have to carry on the work. In essence, they have let the congregation set the budget.

The amazing thing about this is that, in every case where I have seen this put into effect, the congregation purposed more than the leaders proposed, and at the end of the budget year they had given more than they purposed! What's more, the congregations found themselves personally engaged in more of the activities of the church, more enthusiastic, and rejoicing in the work of the Lord as never before! Under this method, I have seen congregations double and triple their giving in less than three years.

Giving as described and taught in the Scriptures is an act of love and a glory to God. It can become one of the most exciting experiences a Christian can enjoy. †

Joe C. Magee, a gospel preacher, lives in Shawnee, Oklahoma, USA.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such *blessing* That there will not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:10).



Evacuating the Padded Pew

How to Develop Your "Recapturing the Vision" Program

Part Three: Growing Through Eight Easy Steps

Step Four — Set Your Goals

As I mentioned previously, if you have "best attendance" records posted, take them down. Everything needs to feel and look fresh and new to the membership. Try to remember that in order to motivate them toward growth, we are re-igniting a flame that has only been flickering for some time. Pew Potato mode has set in, and we must re-excite them about the real possibility of doubling in size!

In this fourth step you need to determine how many people regularly attend your assembly. After you calculate the average number present on Sunday mornings, add twenty to this number for your first goal. In this program you need to have a number of goals, some short-term and some long-term. If you set your goal too high, you risk not reaching it and only discouraging the membership even more. If you set it too low and reach it too quickly, your enthusiasm will climax before you really even get started. In

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the beginning, Sunday morning attendance is what you should be concerned with. Most visitors will attend on Sunday mornings. Therefore, this is the count measured toward your goal.

In the front of the auditorium, place a large colorful thermometer. You can connect two pieces of poster board together end-to-end and design your thermometer with a side graph for your attendance goals so that everyone can see their progress. As you get closer to the goal, color more of the thermometer in, while the crowd is watching and excited!

When you reach the desired goal, decide on another goal and make a new thermometer. The main thought here is that the congregation needs to be able to continually see that progress is being made. As the number grows, the excitement and enthusiasm grow as well!

Step Five — *Paint Colorful Reminders*

If you have someone in the congregation who can paint, then you have an added blessing. The memory of most people is very short. For example, do you remember what was preached on two Sunday nights ago? Probably not, because we have so many things

filling our time and minds, we tend to forget. That is why the congregation needs to continually see reminders of the church's vision and the current goal before their eyes!

Colorful banners need to be painted or printed from a computer to hang above or beside the pulpit, if at all possible. As the congregation looks toward the preacher, they can't help but be reminded that they are recapturing the vision of the early church. It also makes it easier for the preacher during his messages to point to the sign and encourage the newly burning flames to continue in their efforts.

Some examples for banners might be: **RECAPTURING THE VISION**, or **OUR GOAL 70!**, or **DON'T FORGET TO MAKE PHONE CALLS!** Whatever you decide to paint or print, make it colorful and cheerful! Use red, blue, yellow or green, but don't use brown or black! We want to keep the Pew Potatoes awake, not put them back to sleep.

Your goal of recapturing the vision needs to saturate your church bulletin. Make it stand out to anyone reading it. Don't ever let them forget! One of the things you can do is make part of your bulletin a bookmark. As you set your goal, place it in the bookmark along with a passage such as Matthew 28:18-

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20. Members can cut it out and use it in their Bibles to mark their place.

As you reach your first Goal, remove the banners you've been using. If you keep up the same banners for the whole program, people will lose interest. Paint or print new banners for each new goal set!

Step Six — Start Two Picture Boards

Pictures are a valuable tool for the newly excited church! If you don't already have a picture board, you need to start one. Get a corkboard and a Polaroid camera. Start off by taking pictures of all the people who are currently attending the services. Write their names on the white portion of each picture and pin them to the board. As visitors begin attending from the program, the pictures will increase.

After visitors have returned the second week to the services, take their picture and place it on the board. Of course, they are not a member of the Lord's church, as of yet, but this picture board is *for all* who are in the crowd. The picture board serves three different purposes. One is for the members. As more and more visitors begin attending, it will be hard for everyone to remember their names. But, with the picture board, all one has to do is walk to the foyer and find their

picture. It also serves to help the new attendee begin to place names with all the faces of the congregation. Another good reason to have a picture board is because it excites those who are visiting! In a small sense, they have now become a part of something. They begin to associate themselves with this new family who cares enough about them to help people get to know who they are.

The second picture board that needs to be started is a baptismal board. There will come a time in the near future that your visitors will want to put on Christ in baptism. When this happens, it's the single greatest event in their life. It needs to be treated as such! The pictures of your baptisms will also serve to show the congregation, once again, that they are growing. This is a new brother or sister in Christ! It's a blessed event! The babe in Christ can look at the picture in the future and gain strength by being reminded of the way he or she felt on that great day! †

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

John-Mark Wilson works with the Apple Hill Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.



A Church With Vision

Earl D. Edwards

Q. When one speaks of a "church with vision", how is "vision" to be defined?

The best definition for this context is "unusual discernment or foresight". This would include discern-

ing what the fundamental purpose to the church is: serving as "*the pillar and support of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15). The truth is what is revealed by God to men. Men must accept it (John 8:32), guard it from

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corruption (1 Timothy 6:20), and share it with others (Matthew 28:18-20 and Philippians 1:5). Basically, that means our purpose is sharing the uncorrupted message with lost people in this country and other countries where “*Christ has not been named*” (Romans 15:20).

“Foresight”, in the above definition, involves looking out into the future and dreaming (with faith) about what our great God can do through our congregation. Then, *in faith* (2 Corinthians 5:7), the church with vision will go beyond the dreaming stage and, *after much prayer*, it will identify goals and outline the methods through which God will help it to reach those goals.

Q. Once a church has become a “church of vision”, how can it maintain that status?

By Prayer. Elders, preachers, deacons, and members should have prayer sessions (at least two or three times a year) to ask God’s help in growing as a congregation so that they can more fully glorify His name.

By Brainstorming/Dreaming Sessions. Again, elders, preachers, deacons, and members should have at least a session or two each year to

give/get input.

The elders, after close consultation with the preachers and deacons, should then lay plans for nurturing members and reaching the unsaved locally and worldwide.

The elders should then assign deacons and other leaders the task of implementing the plans in the various areas of service and outreach.

The elders should also meet regularly with the leaders who receive assignments to get information about how the assignments are being carried out. They should also encourage those who receive the assign-

ments, as well as giving helpful suggestions.

The elders should then plan at least one session a year (Sunday evening service or Friday night banquet) to honor those who render service in leading the various ministries — “*Honor to whom honor*” is due (Romans 13:7).

May we develop more and more churches (congregations) with vision. †

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No goals are
ever
reached
without the
vision to see
them first.

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** My husband was my half brother (Genesis 20:12).
2. **90** My father's name was Terah (Genesis 11:31).
3. **80** My husband and I became pilgrims, leaving our home and travelling wherever God led us (Genesis 12:1).
4. **70** According to the custom in our time, I gave my handmaid to my husband for a concubine (Genesis 16).
5. **60** When God promised me a son, I laughed. When He questioned why I laughed, I denied that I had, because I was afraid (Genesis 18:9-15).
6. **50** I was a very beautiful woman, so much so that my husband was afraid he would be killed because of me; so when we went into new territory, he asked me to say that I was his sister (not his wife), which was at least a half-truth (Genesis 12:11-13; 20:13).
7. **40** When our promised son grew up to be a young man, we had a very great trial of faith because of him; at the end, God said that through our son, all the nations would be blessed (Genesis 22).



See answer on inside back cover.

8. **30** Because I became a special person in God's plan, my name was changed (Genesis 17:15).

9. **20** Living to be 127, I died in Kirjath Arba (Hebron) and was buried in a cave called Machpelah (Genesis 23:2,19).

10. **10** In Hebrews 11:11, I was held up as a woman of faith, and in 1 Peter 3:6 as a woman who respected her husband. I called him "Lord".

My Score _____



Preaching Jesus

Ken Tyler

Introduction: We are told in Acts 8:35, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” Preaching Jesus brought salvation to the eunuch’s life. In this article I want us to consider what is involved in preaching Jesus.

Preaching Jesus is to proclaim that He died for our sins. *sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken*

“The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a

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away. *And who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth*" (Acts 8:32,33).

This passage is found in Isaiah 53:7,8). Philip began at this scripture and preached Jesus unto the eunuch. Obviously, Philip proclaimed to the eunuch that Jesus died for his sins. The heart of preaching must always be the victorious death of Christ. 1 Peter 2:24 states, "*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree....*" **In preaching Jesus Philip proclaimed this message to the eunuch.**

Preaching Jesus is to proclaim His plan of salvation. Jesus is "*...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him*" (Hebrews 5:9). Philip called upon the eunuch to obey the commands of Jesus to be saved. Acts 8:36-38 tells us, "*And as they were on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*"

When preachers quit telling people what to do to be saved they

have quit preaching Jesus. **In preaching Jesus, Philip proclaimed his plan of salvation.** The eunuch obeyed and was saved.

Preaching Jesus is to proclaim the joy of salvation. It is obvious that the eunuch realized that the greatest of all blessings is salvation. "*And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing*" (Acts 8:39). Only in Jesus can real joy be found, and the preaching of Jesus brought this great blessing to the eunuch. Jesus said, "*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven...*" (Matthew 5:12). **When Philip preached Jesus he proclaimed the joy of salvation.**

Conclusion: Preaching Jesus is the only thing that will heal our sin-sick world. What we need is a brotherhood that is committed to preaching Jesus. "*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4). In other words, they went every where preaching Jesus.

This is our commission and it is the only thing that will get the job done. †

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

Teaching House-to-House

Charles Box

The early church grew because of teaching. There was public teaching and house-to-house teaching. *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"* (Acts 5:42). God's main concern is saving souls. Let God use **you**, your **life**, and your **mouth** to win souls daily.

JESUS TAUGHT OTHERS

Jesus is our example. *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps"* (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus taught Zaccheus (Luke 19), Nicodemus (John 3), and the woman at the well (John 4). He was often face to face and heart to heart with others; teaching them how to go to Heaven. Do we really believe judgment day is coming and that we must follow the example of Jesus?

EARLY CHRISTIANS TAUGHT OTHERS

"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore

those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:3,4). The command Jesus gave was simple, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19). The early disciples understood that this meant "me". In spite of grave risks and persecution, they were soul winners. They went everywhere preaching the word. Yet we sit in our lukewarmness and indifference and wait for the world to come to us to learn of Christ.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS MUST TEACH OTHERS

God's plan is for one who has been taught 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). Christians are the *"light of the world"* and the *"salt of the earth"* (Matthew 5:13-16). Let us hear again God's watchman message to Ezekiel:

"When I say to the wicked,

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'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

"Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul" (Ezekiel 3:18,19).

THOSE WHO TEACH OTHERS ARE WISE

The world may classify the great *philosophers* as wise. God says that *soul-winners* are wise. *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise"* (Proverbs 11:30). Evangelism will help eliminate indifference, disinterest, gossip and many other sins. Those who are evangelistic have a greater desire to study, listen and learn. They want to be able to answer for their faith. *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15).

THOSE WHO TEACH HOUSE-TO- HOUSE WILL HAVE MUCH JOY

It is a joy to be able to pay a debt that is due or past due. *"I am a*

debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:14-16).

Christians are debtors to share the gospel with others. This will bring great joy. *"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15:10). Nothing compares with the joy of seeing God's kingdom increase through soul winning. *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase"* (1 Corinthians 3:6).

MAY GOD WRITE THIS UPON OUR HEART

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). **Now** is the time for action. *"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"* (John 4:35) †

Charles Box works with the Lord's church in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

A Personal Matter

David Deffenbaugh

While reading through the mail on a recent day, something caught my attention. Of the four church bulletins I read, two of them made reference to special efforts being made with those particular congregations to reach the lost in a specific way. One of them was under the slogan "R-E-A-P...Reach Every Available Person". The other prompted the members of that congregation to write down the names of ten people, their Ten "Most Wanted" list. These people would be prayed for every day regarding their salvation.

You see, evangelizing is a personal matter. It pertains to every person and requires much personal involvement. Not a soul was ever saved but that it was a personal matter for someone who cared. It is an encouraging thing to me to see congregations making concerted efforts to get very personal about evangelistic efforts. While the great commission is so expansive as to include "*all the world*" and "*every creature*", until we begin to think of the matter individually and personally, the task will pass us by.

Yes, let's continue to pray for missionaries in foreign lands and preachers wherever they may be. Heaven knows that prayers on their behalf are much needed and appreciated. But let's also pray for ourselves and the Lord's use of us in influencing others to come to Christ.

And let's not leave the "others" as nameless pronouns. Let's be sure our concern is for the person, and our prayers are quite personal as their names are brought before God. Because, after all, saving the lost is a personal matter. †

David Deffenbaugh is the preacher for the South College Church of Christ in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, USA.



Weak Hands and Feeble Knees

Demar Elam

I read a passage in Isaiah 35:3 that says, "*Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.*" Those with weak hands and feeble knees were to be encouraged. They were to be strengthened. Assurance was to be given them concerning the glory of the Lord

and His excellency. Those with a fearful heart were told to be strong and fear not, for God would come and save them.

If one has weak hands and feeble knees, his whole frame is feeble. There are times in the lives of most Christians that the hands become

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weak and the knees get feeble and the need to be strengthened is great. Perhaps it has been your experience in the face of temptation or in the meeting of new challenges that you have felt weak and feeble.

Brethren, **fear** will relax the strength of the arms, and the firmness of the knees. How many great accomplishments have gone by the boards because we are fearful and our hands and knees become weak and feeble? Fear must be removed and replaced with the full assurance that God will favor His people. Untold things are never realized because we forget the power and excellency of the living God! Paul told Timothy, *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:2).

Please envision the imagery here used. Can't you see this pitiful individual standing before you and his frame is shaking because his knees are weak with fear? His whole body trembles and his arms are limp and hang lifelessly. Fear has so gripped him that his body no longer responds to his bidding. Isaiah, the great prophet of the living God, says in verse 4, *"Say to them that are of a terrified heart, be strong! Fear ye not! Behold, your God will come for vengeance, for a divine retribution. He will come, and bring you salvation."* Isaiah

was speaking of the time that Christ would come, and in verse eight he mentions that a highway of holiness will be made available. So, he is saying to those who have become weak in faith, doubting and fearful, to cheer up and take heart. Jehovah is going to provide!

That highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8) has been opened and the redeemed walk there today (Isaiah 35:9, Galatians 3:13; 4:5, Revelation 5:9.) We need to take heart and enjoy the songs of everlasting joy and gladness promised in verse 9. Ah, the beauty of seeing sorrow and sighing flee away!

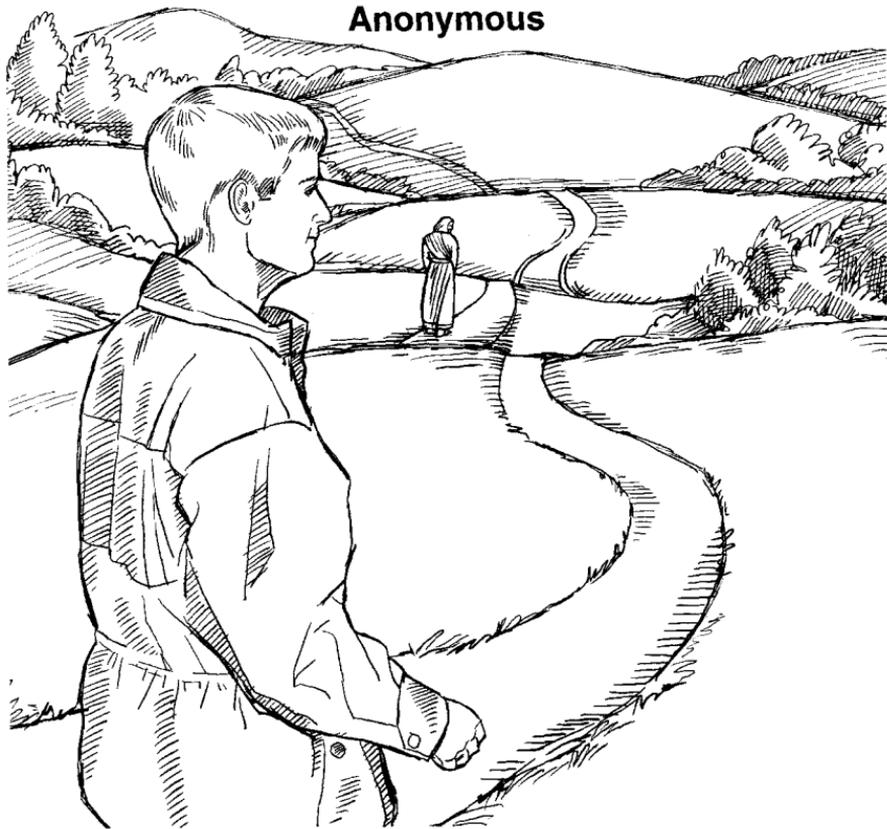
Are you afflicted with weak hands and feeble knees? May I say to you, be strong! Fear ye not! Jehovah has sent salvation and there is a highway of holiness available to you today. We need not fear. We need not be of weak hands and feeble knees. This holy road is available to all. It is an upper road that leads to the Holy City.

The prophet, in language of unmixed consolation, says that Jehovah will provide. Without doubt, his words brought consolation to those of his day and should console and reassure those of us who travel the highway of holiness today. †

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

Living Christianity

Anonymous



A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night dinner. In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of baskets of apples. Apples flew everywhere.

Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding.

All but one. He paused, took a deep breath, got in touch with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand

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had been overturned. He told his buddies to go on without him, waved good-bye, told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to where the apples had rolled all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did.

The 16-year-old girl who was selling the apples was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration. At the same time she was helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping, and no one caring about her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them into the baskets, and helped set up the display once more. As he did so, he noticed that many of the apples had become battered and bruised, so he set them aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here. Please take this \$20.00 for the damage we did. Are you OK?" She nodded through her tears. He continued on with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly."

As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister...." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?" He stopped in mid-stride and then slowly made his way to catch the later flight with her question burning in his soul.

"Are you Jesus?"

Do people mistake you for Jesus? As Christians, that's what we're all about, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace. If we claim to know Him, we should live, walk and act as He would. Knowing Him is more than simply quoting Scripture and going to worship. It's actually living the Word, as life unfolds day to day.

You are the apple of His eye even though we, too, have been bruised and damaged by a fall. He stopped what He was doing and picked up you and me on a hill called Calvary. He paid in full for the damage sin had done to us. We should start living like we are worth the price He paid. †

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Two Mites

T. Pierce Brown

Those of us who preach have no doubt preached about the poor widow who gave two mites, which was all she had (Luke 21:4). We have commended her attitude and action. How many of us have followed her example or have even come close to practicing what we commended.

Let's consider another aspect of the situation. Here was a woman whose attitude and actions were pleasing to God. Why had He allowed her to get into such a pitiful condition? David said in Psalm 37:25, *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."* Does David's statement apply to the poor widow in any way? If so, how?

Jesus said in Luke 6:38, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom."* Does this statement have any bearing on her situation? If so, what? Should she have expected that as a result of her sacrificial act men would provide for her every need?

Paul expressed a principle in 2 Corinthians 9:10, *"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness."* Does this principle apply only to Christians, or did God have less concern for a loving sacrificial Jew than He does for us?

We may not be able to answer these questions or many others that could be raised about this story, but there are several points that we think should be made. First, nowhere in the Bible does God promise an abundance of material blessings for the righteous, contrary to the teaching of some popular television evangelists who make millions from their unrighteous preaching.

Second, Jesus does teach us not to be anxious about material things, for He says in Matthew 6:30, *"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"* He did not promise a car, truck, and two television sets. There is no doubt in our mind that God provided for the

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needs of this poor widow after she had cast into the treasury all her living, but we have no reason to assume that He provided *more* than she needed.

Third, God has various laws that operate in various realms. Obedience or disobedience to those laws produces certain results. For example, the law of gravity applies to all of us. If a very righteous man and an ungodly one both carelessly fell from the top of the Empire State building, they would both suffer the same kind of consequences. There are agricultural laws. If an atheist and a Christian have farms, and the atheist plants and attends properly to his crops and the Christian does not, the atheist will prosper more than the Christian.

However, all of that does not negate the fact that God in His mercy and providence can and does overrule situations. Romans 8:28 says, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*" We are confident that although in the normal course of events a person may die if he or she violates the law of gravity, or some law of health, God can intervene providentially and preserve the life of that individual to fulfill some purpose He has in mind.

If the poor widow had been a brilliant financial genius who had suffered the loss of her possessions through some greedy crook, it would not be out of character for God to providentially provide her the opportunity to become rich after she gave all she had to His service. However, if she had been just an ordinary person with no outstanding financial ability or wisdom, there is nothing in God's Word that would lead us to conclude that God would do more than provide her with her simplest needs. The principle we need to understand is that God blesses a person, not just in terms of his/her ability, but in terms of how he/she uses that ability for the glory of God. If a righteous man is left in poverty, it is certain that God will work that situation for good, not only for that man, but for others who love the Lord. It may cause him to learn to trust in and depend upon God in a greater fashion, and thus strengthen his faith and love. It may cause others to have and show compassion to his needs and thus strengthen their Christian character.

So, we do not know exactly what happened to the poor widow. We do know, however, that she was blessed of God, and we have no doubt that He took care of her needs and caused her to be a greater blessing to others as a result of her sacrificial attitude. It might be well if we would try to move closer to her attitude and action. †

T. Pierce Brown lives and preaches in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

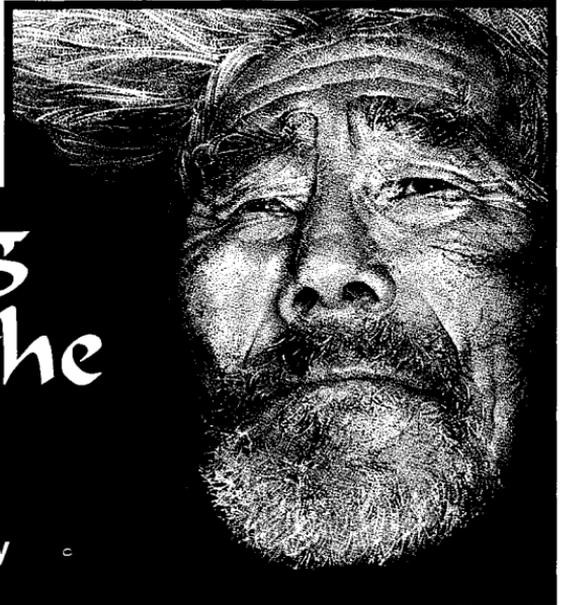
There is an Old Testament story which pointedly reminds us that there are different ways of seeing.

Saul is the King of Israel. But because of his disobedience, God has sent Samuel the prophet to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons to replace Saul on the throne. Upon his arrival, Samuel sees Eliab, Jesse's firstborn. Eliab is a fine figure of a man. As soon as Samuel's eyes light upon him he is sure that this will be the man of God's choice. Eliab simply had the look of a king about him!

But God reminded

The point is that there are different ways to see! Man sees the outside, but God gazes directly upon the soul! Think of the different ways we see.

1. Sometimes we see with the eyes. This is a natural sight. Walking in a meadow, I see a flower. An image is projected on the retina of my eye and carried to the optic nerve of my brain — a



Seeing With the Soul

Bobby Dockery

Samuel that He does not see as man does: *"For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). Eliab was not the Lord's choice, but David, *"The man after God's own heart."*

purely mechanical function which can be explained in scientific terms.

2. Sometimes we see with the mind. This is perception — understanding. A biologist sees the same flower and immediately catalogues it in his mind by phylum,

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genus, and species and recalls the proper Latin name for it. He can explain why the stem is green and the petals have their distinctive color. He can tell us its life cycle and its possible commercial uses.

3. Sometimes we see with the heart. This is vision filtered through emotion. A man sees the flower in the meadow and remembers it was his mother's favorite. He remembers how she grew them around the kitchen door of his boyhood home. He is flooded with tender memories of his mother and his youth. He is not really seeing the flower, but something which it evokes in his memory.

4. It is also possible to see with the soul. This is spiritual perception. We can look at the flower and see the God who conceived it, designed it, created it, and providentially sustains it! It may be taken as an eloquent argument for the existence and power of God (Psalm 19:1,2). That which is seen reveals to us that which does not appear.

God's people must cultivate this capacity to see with the soul. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7). We must learn to see the unseen. There are things we do not see at this present moment with our natural eyes; we must look at them with the soul (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Many people refuse to believe

in anything they can't see with the eyes. But the Bible insists that it is the things we see with the soul which are really real! What we see with the eyes is transient and passing. Some day it will disappear and will never be seen again (2 Peter 3:10). What we see with the soul is eternal, enduring, and lasting! It is the unseen which is real!

J.C. Penney once remarked, "I am losing my vision. No, I take that back. My eyesight is failing, but my vision is better than ever." There's a lot of difference between the two! It is what we see with the soul that really matters! †

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

Direction

I knew not where to turn,
Broken — tossed about —
I looked toward the South
The hills were there,
Still, calm and unafraid,
Standing the storms that
come,
I took heart and smiled;
Lifting my tear-wet face to
heaven,
I prayed.

— Charles R. Brewer

The Discovery of Life

Michael L. King

Man, for the most part, lives in a quandary while in search of the real meaning of life. Those Greeks who were reasoning with Paul on Mars' Hill in Athens were searching, but looking in all the wrong places. Paul pointed them away from their "unknown god", by declaring unto them the true God Who is able to *"give to all life, and breath, and all things...through he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our very being"* (Acts 17:23-28).

Happiness and fulfillment in life are so close, but for many they remain but a distant figment of their imagination. It is vitally important that we get a grip on what really constitutes life. The Lord said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). When any of God's creatures are not enjoying that "abundant life," His will for man is thwarted.

What a thrill it is in the spring of the year to go to the garden after having planted rows of seeds and to find them responding to God's nurturing rain and sunshine! As the growth progresses, additional joy is

experienced with the blooming and development of fruit. The real satisfaction is realized when harvest allows one to glean the benefits of much labor and patience.

In like manner, can we truthfully say that God delights as He walks through the "garden of my life"? It is altogether possible to be a Christian and still miss the abundant life! Those who respond to Jesus and are born again truly enter into the realms of beginning again and a newness of life.

Spiritual renewal (Romans 12:1,2) is similar to a spring of water which perpetually springs up into an abundant flow from resources deep within. It is expected by God that the Christian live an abundant life now. It is possible that we have allowed the headwaters to be depleted due to a lack of spiritual growth.

Tremendous trust must characterize each life that would be bountiful with joy and hope, both now and in eternity. We must make ourselves available to God and trust Him to lead us into new areas of spiritual growth, without fear of failure.

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The Lord commissioned His devoted apostles to spread the Word in His absence and promised that He would “*be with them always*” (Matthew 28:18-20). He had told them that He would be seated at God’s right hand making preparation for them to join Him (John 14:1-3). They accepted the promise of God’s grace and power as sufficient to meet their genuine needs in their lives in serving Him.

God assures us that we can experience His blessings in this life and in heaven as well. There is great comfort in confidently believing that in living as God’s children in this life, His goodness “*shall follow me all the days of my life*” (Psalm 23:6).

Just as God provided for His Jewish nation returning from Egyptian bondage, He will care for His people today! With His custodial care and providential oversight of them, He saw to it that quail flew into the camp, manna was gathered by the baskets-full, and water poured generously from the rocks (Numbers 11:4-9,31,32; Exodus 17:6).

God will also assess and bless us according to our daily needs. Paul preached what he practiced, “*Seek those things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above...Put on the new man, which*

is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him...And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:1,2,10,15). Abundant living gives fullness to life now, with eternal rejoicing to follow. The key to the discovery of life is to find God, “*For in him we live, and move, and have our being.*” For He is “*not far from every one of us*” (Acts 17:27, 28). The promise is, “*for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*” (Matthew 7:7,8).

If you desire the abundant life now, become diligent and determined with your search. The content of Paul’s prayer for his Ephesian brethren echoes this writer’s sentiments for each reader, “*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:16-19). †

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



A meek man who is on his way to the top stands still and waits on the Lord, instead of forging ahead and making a blunder and getting everything in a tangled mess for the Lord to unravel. It is almost unbelievable how convoluted and involved our lives can become if we don't humble ourselves and *wait on the Lord* before we make any major decision or important move.

WAIT ON THE LORD

David Macy

It takes a meek, submissive, trusting person to wait on the Lord, because waiting is one of the most difficult things we have to do. It is much easier, many times, to move ahead and try *something* than it is to wait for God's shaping and answers to prayers.

A lady was watching a potter at his work, and she noticed that one foot was kept busy while the other one remained still on the ground. She said, in a kind and sympathetic tone, "How tired your foot must be." The potter raised his eyes and said, "No, ma'am, it isn't the foot that works that's tired, it's the foot that stands."

"My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:5-8). We wait on

the Lord by committing ourselves into His hands, being subject to Him, and being silent before Him. When a person is meek and lowly, and completely submissive to the Almighty God, the Lord can guide and direct his life, through His word, through opening of opportunity and closing doors in denial, and through using every sort of tool in His providential care, down the right paths which lead to happiness, peace, and security in His love.

There are two giant hurdles we must leap over before we can wait on the Lord and receive the tremendous blessings which come with waiting. These two hurdles are **pride** and **self will**. When we can lay pride to rest and replace it with meekness, and send self will packing and put God's will in its place, we can truly wait on the Lord. The results of our waiting will be astounding to ourselves, and to others.

My personal life has been like a constant tug-of-war, with God on one end of the rope and myself on the other. When I have stood still and let God work in His own time schedule, everything was ultimately successful. When I pulled to have my own way, contrary to what God knew was best, everything was downhill, and failure was my constant companion.

Those who have not obeyed the gospel to become children of God

have not yet learned to submit to the Lord and wait on Him. If this is your situation, my friend, please give up the struggle and let Him have His way with you. Believe in Him with all your heart and meekly obey His simple commandments, being baptized into His spiritual family, the church (Acts 2; Romans 6:3,4). You will find rest for your troubled soul. God will give you salvation, and reward your faithfulness with eternal life, and you will be forever glad you let Him have His way with you. †

David Macy, before his death, was a Gospel preacher in Blue Ridge, Georgia, USA.

Moment by Moment

Never a trial that He is not there,
 Never a burden that He doth not bear,
 Never a sorrow that He doth not share,
 Moment by moment I'm under His care.

Never a heartache, and never a groan,
 Never a teardrop, and never a moan,
 Never a danger but there,
 on the throne,
 Moment by moment, He thinks
 of His own.

Never a weakness
 that He doth not feel,
 Never a sickness that He cannot heal.
 Moment by moment, in woe
 or in weal,
 Jesus, my Savior, abides with me still.

— Daniel W. Whittle

During Times of Trial

Jesús Rodríguez

How should a Christian act when he is being mistreated and even persecuted? At times in the church, situations arise which are difficult for us to understand or manage. It is then that we must go to the Word of God for guidance in how we function as Christians. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, behavioral rules are given for those occasions when human wisdom and logic would fail us.

The second thing we must do is to ask God to help us to understand and control our emotions. Overwrought emotions often cloud our understanding and do not permit us to reason clearly. It is only by growing in divine nature, as described in 2 Peter 1:4, that we can avoid serious and harmful mistakes during times of trial.

“And beside 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” (2 Peter 1:5-8).

When we have with perseverance asked the guidance of the Lord in prayer, we should then ask ourselves: What would Jesus do in such a situation? How is the fruit of the Spirit working in me? *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23).*

Christ teaches us the importance of mercy and pardon. If we do not feel compassion for those who persecute us, if we do not deal fairly with those who don't especially please us, how can we ourselves expect pardon from the Lord? Jesus said, *“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15).*

It could be that some day we ourselves will need the mercy and pardon which we may be denying to someone else today.

Brethren, let's remember this: Christ is constantly giving us another chance. Let's do the same to those who wrong us. †

Jesús Rodríguez is a preacher of the gospel in the Church of Christ in Mesa, Arizona, USA.

Marry Once,

Marry Well

Dale Grissom

Young people, the consequences of many decisions you make during your teenage years will follow you throughout life. There is nothing wrong with having a good time and enjoying yourselves, but be careful not to take lightly those things of a serious nature. Relationships — with friends, the opposite sex, and especially with God — are of the utmost importance. Making decisions that will draw you closer to God will ultimately bring you more happiness throughout this life.

When dating, don't settle for someone who is not a Christian. The standards you set for yourself are much easier to keep when the person you are dating has the same morals and goals. You will never regret keeping your virginity until marriage.

And when the time comes for marriage, be careful to marry into a good family. Don't make the mistake of thinking you are not marrying the family, because you do become a part of your mate's family. Learn to love them and build a special relationship with them.

Build a solid Christian home. Marry for life and bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Give them the stability of two loving and devoted Christian parents.

Sound easy? It's not. God never promised it would be. But He did promise that the rewards — both now and hereafter — will be worth the effort.

Consider some tragedies that can be avoided by putting Christ first in your life and by making decisions based upon His Word: out-of wedlock pregnancy, sexually-transmitted diseases, home torn apart by divorce, children raised in a one-parent home. Sort of puts things into perspective, doesn't it? Those little everyday decisions may not be so little after all.

Begin now to make responsible decisions. Put Christ on the throne in your heart, and keep Him there. Love Him now, and live with Him eternally. †

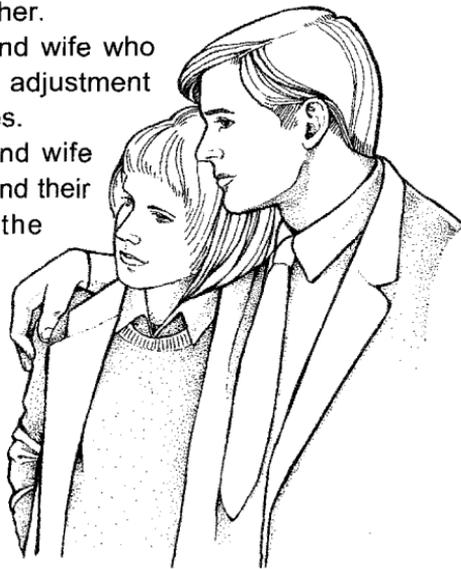
Dale Grissom works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

- ❖ Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate and loving after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.
- ❖ Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.
- ❖ Blessed are they who have a sense of humor, for this attribute will be a handy shock absorber.
- ❖ Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world, and who joyfully fulfill their marriage vows of a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness to each other.
- ❖ Blessed are they who remember to thank God for their food before they partake of it, and who set aside some time each day for the reading of the Bible and prayer together.
- ❖ Blessed are the married couples who abstain from alcoholic drinks.
- ❖ Blessed are they who attain parenthood, for children are a heritage of the Lord.
- ❖ Blessed are those mates who never speak loudly to each other and who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word".
- ❖ Blessed are the husband and wife who faithfully attend the worship services of the church together.
- ❖ Blessed are the husband and wife who can work out their problems of adjustment without interference from relatives.
- ❖ Blessed are the husband and wife who humbly dedicate their lives and their home to Christ, and practice the teachings of Christ by being unselfish, loyal and loving. †

Blessings for the Married

Selected





Love From Home

Frances Parr

As usual, the children were running late as they left for school. One forgot her book and had to go back and get it. She hurried out the door and then looked back quickly. "Love you, Mom," she called as she ran to catch up with her brother and sisters. "I love you, too," was the reply.

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Hearing their sister and mother's farewell greeting, the others in the group quickly added their words of affection, to which their mother responded. When the children were out of sight and hearing, the woman went back into the house with a smile on her face. Just another morning getting everyone off to their respective places for the day.

There are many stories of partings in the Bible. Genesis 31 tells of Jacob and his wives and children leaving his father-in-law, Laban, to go back to Jacob's homeland of Israel. Jacob named the place where they parted Mizpah, because he said, "*May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.*" Jacob and Laban had had disagreements in the past; however, they made covenants not ever to meet each other for harm. Laban kissed his daughters and their children and went back to his own home. There is no mention in the Bible of them ever meeting again.

A lesson can be learned from these two men and their families. We never know when we may be saying the last "goodbye" to a loved one. There is no guarantee that either person will live to return. That fact alone should make us want to part company in peace and love. It should provoke an urgent desire to correct any misunderstandings.

This writer has personally known one who angrily left home after an argument, with harsh words and feelings on both sides. Soon afterward he lost his life in an accident. In such cases, guilt and sorrow almost consume the persons left behind.

Statistics show that entire families who begin their day with hot food, encouraging words, and affection do their respective tasks more efficiently during the time they are apart. The unfortunate ones who leave each other after a quarrel do not fare as well. Unhappy or stressed students make poorer grades in school and do not get along with others as well as children who leave home with a positive attitude. It is the responsibility of parents to instill in their children the positive attitudes, as well as a depth of love and forgiveness, that make for peace in families. This is best done by example. **Be before them what you want them to become.**

Take the advice of the wisest man who ever lived — Solomon. He said, in Proverbs 17:22, "*A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.*" No matter what position you occupy in your family, make it your goal to begin each day treating others with love and cheerfulness. †

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

PROVERBS 17:22



A man was speaking frantically into the phone. "My wife is pregnant and her contractions are only two minutes apart!"

"Is this her first child?" the doctor asked.

The man shouted, "No! This is her husband!"



Little Anna and her younger brother Andrew were sitting together in church. Andrew giggled, sang, and talked out loud.

Finally his big sister had had enough. She said, "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

Andrew asked, "Why? Who's going to stop me?"

Anna pointed to the back of the auditorium and said, "See those two men standing by the doors? They're hushers."

A young mother watched as her 3-year-old son opened the birthday gift from his grandmother. He squealed delightedly when he discovered a water pistol and immediately headed for the nearest sink.

The mother, not so pleased, turned to her mother and said, "I'm surprised at you. Don't you remember how we used to drive you nearly crazy with water guns?"

The grandmother grinned, then replied, "Yes."



The findings of a major scientific study of cannibals have just been released, with the most notable discovery being that cannibals do not eat clowns...It seems that they taste funny.



Question: "So, what is the speed of dark?"



Husband: "This is our wedding anniversary. What would you like to do?"

Wife: "Take me out to some place expensive."

He took her to the gas station.

PROVERBS 17:22

The boss asked one of his new employees, "Do you believe in life after death?"

"Yes sir, I do," the young man replied.

"Well," the boss said, "that makes everything just fine, because after you left work yesterday to attend your grandmother's funeral, she stopped by to see you."



A Sunday school teacher asked her little children why it's important to be quiet in church. One bright little girl answered, "Because people are sleeping."



Cousin Clarence went to the doctor for a checkup, and the doctor told him that he needs more exercise. Clarence immediately started following the doctor's advice. Now, instead of watching golf on TV, he watches tennis.



Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the post office? What are we supposed to do...write to those characters? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the mail carriers can look for them while they deliver the mail?

Three deep questions about which to contemplate:

(1) Why are people IN a movie, but ON TV?

(2) How come Cupid is never seen with a girlfriend?

(3) Do people ever try to scream at the BOTTOM of their lungs?



After just moving to town, Gladys Dunn decided that the first Sunday, she would visit the church near her new apartment. She found herself in a pretty auditorium, everyone greeted her warmly, and as the service began, she enjoyed the inspiring hymns.

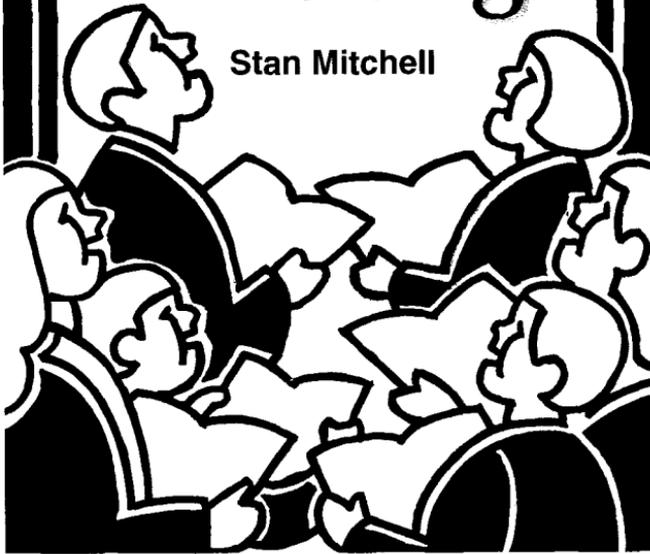
But when the sermon began, it went on and on and on. In fact it was without substance and not at all interesting. Glancing around, she noticed that many in the congregation were nodding off, not even trying to stay awake.

Finally it was over, though, and people stood up for the final hymn and prayer. After the service, to be social, she turned to the still sleepy looking gentleman next to her, extended her hand in greeting, and said, "Hello, I'm Gladys Dunn."

The gentleman replied, "You and me both!"

Our Worship In Song

Stan Mitchell



What I write below is intended as an explanation, expressed kindly and clearly, for our conviction that mechanical instruments of music are not authorized for the Christian in worship.

To be fair, the Bible is silent on many subjects. It does not mention

hymnbooks or devotionals, church pews, or Wednesday night prayer meeting. So why do we have each of these, and not the musical instrument in worship?

For the same reason that a "Stop" sign, by instructing us to stop, naturally prohibits rolling through an intersection. This is a line of reasoning that we take in everyday life. When our children are told to arrive at school at eight in the morning, this

instruction includes eight o'clock and excludes nine! When we order a cup of coffee in a restaurant, that logically excludes a mug of hot chocolate or a cup of tea! A command is inclusive as well as exclusive. You cannot stop at an intersection and roll through at the same

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time. To follow one means to disregard the other. When the New Testament instructs Christians to sing, it is both what the command includes (singing) and what it excludes (other options). That convinces us to sing a cappella.

Please read these New Testament passages, and observe the musical verb used in each.

*"When they had **sung** a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30).*

*"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing** hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25).*

*"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, I will **sing** hymns to your name" (Romans 15:9).*

*"Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and **sing** praises to him all you peoples" (Romans 15:11).*

*"So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will **sing** with my spirit, but I will also **sing** with my mind" (1 Corinthians 14:15).*

*"Speak to one another with songs, hymns and spiritual songs. **Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord**" (Ephesians 5:19).*

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you **sing** psalms, hymns and*

spiritual songs in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

*"I will declare my name to your brothers, in the presence of the congregation I will **sing** your praises" (Hebrews 2:12).*

*"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him **sing** songs of praise" (James 5:13).*

The argument is, I believe, accumulative. If the Holy Spirit had commanded us in one verse to sing, and one verse alone, we might conclude that this was a coincidence, and that He intended the instrument to accompany the songs. But as we read each verse, and as we see the New Testament's exclusive use of the verb "sing" for our worship in song, the evidence gathers strength. This is no mere oversight. It was the Spirit's intention that we *sing*, and not *play* our praise to God.

I am aware that there is other evidence for a cappella music in worship. Some will appeal to the witness of the early church. Fair enough. But the most important plank in our conviction has already been laid, that of the plain evidence of the Scriptures.

I am aware that the issue of instrumental music in worship is not a dead one, even in churches of Christ. Two comments which I have overheard recently indicate that this is so.

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"I can conscientiously worship with or without the instrument," one Christian said. "I have a great respect," another Christian told me, "for the church of Christ's tradition of a cappella music."

I hope I responded to each person in kindness, yet in truth. Our practice of a cappella music is no tradition; it is a sincere conviction gained from a study of the Scriptures, and what is more, the New Testament is certainly not silent on the subject!

Yet still there are objections. "What about David? He played with a harp, didn't he?" This comment surprised me, for it was made by a young man who had grown up in the church and had been trained to minister at an institution within our brotherhood. I answered that we don't use David's harp for the same reason that we don't keep the Passover and offer animal sacrifices in Jerusalem. The New Covenant is

the Christian's guide for doctrine and practice today (Colossians 2:14,15; Hebrews 9:15-17).

"Well," another person remarked, "I am not willing to condemn people to Hell because they don't believe we should worship a cappella." Neither am I. It is my task to teach and proclaim. It is God's to judge. And yet, teach I must.

We worship a cappella, not just because **the Bible is silent on the subject of the instrument**, but also because **it is not silent on the subject of singing!**

We are commanded to do the latter; the Bible is silent on the former.

We are commanded frequently to sing; we are never commanded to sing and play.

Our desire is to follow God's instructions simply, respectfully, and fully. †

Stan Mitchell preaches for the church of Christ in Borger, Texas, USA.

Question:

If God had required that each of us worship by "singing" and "playing", would you be capable of playing an instrument?

If God had required that each of us worship by "singing" and "playing", would you be able to hear and understand what was being "taught" in the hymn, in the midst of the great noise and confusion of so many instruments being played?

When We Come Before *the Lord*

Ronald D. Bryant

It is suggested that when people come into the worship assembly there are at least two things they can expect: They can expect to be **comforted** or **confronted**, and the one who does the comforting or the confronting is the Lord.

Now most of us are comfortable with the idea of being comforted, and the words of Jesus are our refuge (see Matthew 11:28-30). But the thought of being confronted is not so desirable. Yet, in His personal ministry, Jesus was confrontational. He was confrontational for the purpose of turning men to righteousness, and thus to life eternal. He confronted in an earnest effort to help, not hurt. And, to this day, He has neither changed in His character, nor in His desire to turn men to the way of life.

When we come into the assembly of God's people, we are in the presence of the Lord, and we can be assured that He longs for us to be made whole. His desire is to comfort us.

Yet, we can also be assured that He will not wink at our failings, but will lovingly confront us, when and where the need lies, and for our

eternal good. We can know that Jesus sees us as we are and confronts us in the same consistent manner of His character.

Consider: Jesus confronts us with our lack of preparation, our lack of reverence, our lack of pure adoration. He confronts us in our pettiness, our self-centeredness, our self-sufficiency. He confronts us in our empty posturing, our empty words, our empty hearts. He confronts us in our lack of love, our lack of faith, our lack of humility. He confronts us with our belief that the world revolves around us, that others must cater to us, that even the worship must serve us.

He confronts us! He confronts us for the purpose of calling us to genuineness of faith, of humility, of repentance, of worship, of life. He is the reason for life, for hope, for holy conduct. He must ever be the point of our focus. He must ever be the one we come to meet in the assembly, and the one for whom we live every day of our lives. †

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

Assembly Distractions

Hershel Dyer

Back in the 4th century (300's A.D.), there was grave concern over disorder in the assembly. Preachers such as John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, and the noted historian-preacher, Eusebius Pamphilus, complained about these.

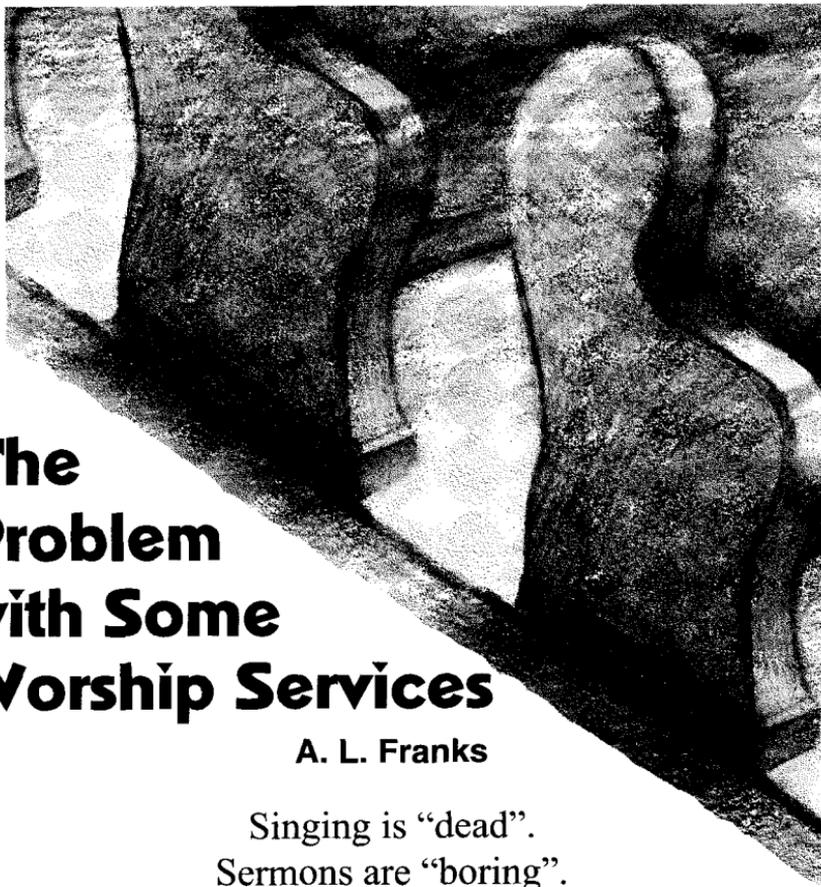
Chrysostom, a most articulate and eloquent preacher, was bothered by "needless noise and frivolous conversation." While preaching, he felt that his sermon was disturbed by some who talked excessively. Preachers made similar complaints, especially in cities such as Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, etc.

Other bothersome behavior is mentioned, which included shouting acclamations for the preacher, clapping, waving handkerchiefs, and other actions borrowed from the theaters of that day. Gregory Nazianzen declared his feelings regarding applause for preachers in the following words:

"Of what avail to me is this applause and tumult? One thing only I require of you — that you prove to me your approbation and obedience by your works. That will be praise for me — gain for yourselves; that will be to me a greater honor than the imperial crown. I desire not your applause and clamor. I have but one wish — that you hear me with calmness and attention, and that you practice my precepts. For this is not a theater; ye sit not here to behold actors and to confer upon such men your applause. Here is the place to learn the things of God."

Human nature remains much the same. There are still those who are eager to turn the worship of God into a theatrical production — singers, preachers, prayer leaders, baptismal services, etc. being a performance for the applause of the spectators! †

Hershel Dyer is a gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.



The Problem with Some Worship Services

A. L. Franks

Singing is “dead”.
Sermons are “boring”.
People are “unfriendly”.

The following are some suggestions for dealing with problems that can create the need for improving our worship services.

Singing

Secure the best song leader possible. Encourage everyone to sing, and to sing out. Give more time and attention to singing. Sing more songs. Practice. Learn new songs. Obey the Scriptures: sing “*with grace in your hearts unto God*” (Colossians 3:16). Speak “*one to another...singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:19). But we must

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always remember that vocal music is authorized, and that God is the object of our worship (“unto God,” “to the Lord”). When we put our hearts into our singing, and give attention to the words of the song, while focusing on God, our song service will take on new spiritual life.

Preaching

Request/require your preacher to study (adequately prepare) and to “preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:2). “Set your affection on things that are above” (Colossians 3:2). “Love not the world...the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15,16). Sermons are not for entertainment, but to edify, exhort, and even to rebuke. Preachers are not all equally qualified. Pray. Listen. Obey.

Friendliness

Speak first. Don’t wait on the other person. Be genuinely interested in others. When asking, “How are you?” wait for an answer. Truly care. We are family. My brother; my sister; my friend...Love is the key. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one toward another” (John 13:35). A friendly congregation begins with **me**. Friendliness is contagious. Be a leader in promoting interest, compassion, concern, and genuine love within the congregation.

I read somewhere, “He that would have friends must show himself friendly.” Sounds Biblical?...Found it! It’s Proverbs 18:24: “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Avoid being judgmental or suspicious. Accept others as you would be accepted. “Do unto others...” You remember the rest of the verse. It is truly the “golden rule”. It is the basis of friendliness.

In Conclusion

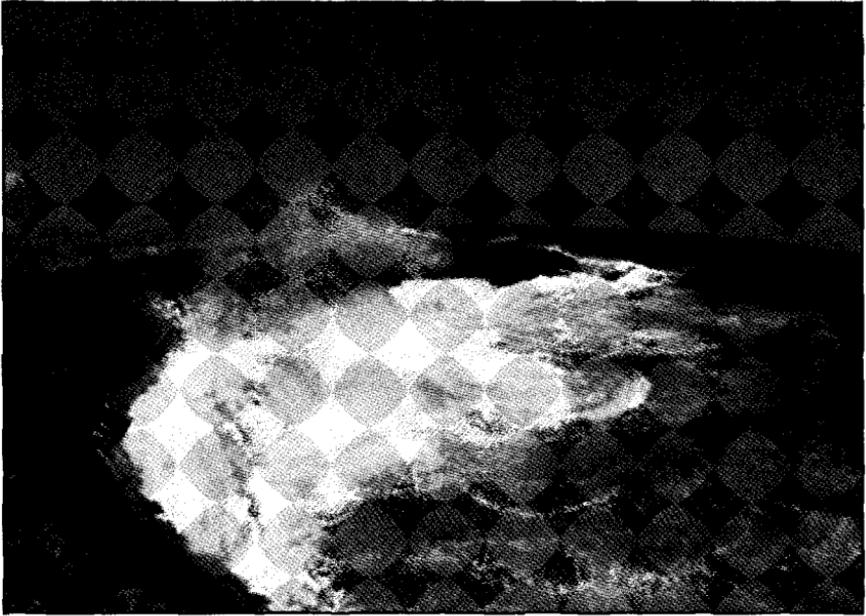
1. We don’t have to **change the music**. Stay with **vocal**.
2. We don’t have to **change the message**. Stick with the Bible.
3. We may have to **change our attitude and behavior** toward others and show that we truly care for one another. Be friendly yourself. You may be surprised how friendly the church can become in response. †

A.L. Franks is the Editor of *Magnolia Messenger* and lives in Kosciusko, Mississippi, USA.

Beneath the watery depths, foundations sank,
 the systems heaved, and tremors shook the core.
 The waves advanced beyond the beach's bank
 and took the ocean's turmoils far ashore.
 Then back to sea, they scoured the earth of souls,
 and left the rest to mourn the dead and thirst
 for water -- water covering both world's poles,
 and having done an hour's accursed worst.
 Let none blame God for death or danger; not
 a single evil act is his, nor harm.
 By cleansing water he saves us from our lot,
 and mercy flows from his extended arm.

Waves and Water
 J. Randal Matheny

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE



Our Broken World

Betty Burton Choate

Debris, chaos, and death cover the beaches. The world that was whole and thriving, bustling with the day's busy-ness is crushed and mangled — broken beyond recognition.

Survivors of the tsunami question, some piteously, some in defeat, others in defiance, but all ask, “Why? Why?” Some look around at the death and destruction, and they demand, “Why did *God* do this to me?”

God.... It is a time to think about God. Perhaps it is even a time to ask such questions and to look for answers.

Did God directly cause the earthquake and the tsunami? If so, was there a reason? Was He *punishing* people who were great *sinner*s or who had *forgotten Him*?

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God is not speaking audibly to answer our questions, but He has spoken in His word. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, says that God created the earth, with its separation of water and land, and that He put in place the moon with the gravitational pull that controls the tides. When He had finished the habitation especially designed for humans, He saw that everything He had made was *very good*.

That world, as it came from God's hands, was perfect — a safe haven, protected by nature, not threatened by it. Fossils indicate that a tropical climate prevailed all over the globe, most likely the result of a greenhouse effect of a vapor canopy (“the waters above the firmament”, Genesis 1:7).

God created a human couple to inhabit and populate that perfect world. He blessed them with all that they needed, asking only one thing of their parent-child relationship: **that they obey Him**. Tragically, another “person” came on the scene — Satan — a created spirit who had, himself, chosen to disobey his Creator. He reasoned with Eve, tempting her to listen to himself instead of God.

Through the disobedience — the sin — of Adam and Eve, God's perfect creation was broken. Sin brought curse and death to the world. God said, “*Cursed is the ground for your sake...*” (Genesis 1:17). We have a further description in Romans 8:20-22: “*...the creation was subjected to futility...the whole creation groans and travails in ... pangs until now...*”

Disobedience broke the perfect relationship with God, through the separating wall of sin, and sin resulted in death, pain, and destruction which pervaded all of God's perfect creation. God did not *desire* this evil to come on the world and humanity. His desire had been for the perfection He had created. But sin and obedience to Satan, who is the father of lies and death, transformed the world.

Sin continued to tighten its grip. Genesis 6:5 says that, finally, “*the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” As in the beginning, God **warned** of the consequences of disobedience — **that He would send a flood to destroy the evil from the earth**. But even though the righteous Noah preached God's warning all the years he was building the ark, which would save his family, the world didn't listen.

And the flood came.

Genesis 7:11 says “*on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*” These words are a Biblical description of vast earthquake and volcanic activity in the depths of

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the ocean and throughout the world. The entire earth was flooded, covering even the mountains with the waters.

NASA has said that the one earthquake of December 26 “shifted Earth’s ‘mean North Pole’ by about 2.5 centimeters (1 inch)”, affected the shape of the earth, and “decreased the length of the day by 2.68 microseconds”, because the earth’s increased roundness causes it to spin a little faster than before. (See http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2005/10jan_earthquake.htm?list148566).

If a **single earthquake** could cause these measurable changes in the earth, what tremendous changes must have taken place when the disaster was not pin-pointed at one spot on the ocean’s floor but covered the entire earth?

Certainly, such an upheaval would have shifted the earth on its axis, burying the lush, tropical vegetation of the Arctic and Antarctic regions under ice and snow so deep that the land surface would not be seen again. Ocean depths would have been lowered, with mountains being pushed upward in compensation, to displace the waters that had washed — not as tsunami waves for a few minutes over limited coastal areas — but as a flood that covered the earth for the better part of a year.

Sin had broken the entire world.

The paradise of nature was destroyed. Changes in the earth and its protective water vapor canopy brought new “laws” governing nature. Now there were fault lines in the earth’s crust where enormous earthquakes could occur. There were cold and hot air currents that would cause tornadoes, hurricanes, and typhoons. The sun and rain would nurture both the good and evil, but all people would also be exposed to the destruction and death brought as the natural result of nature’s furies.

God promised Noah, *“Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth”* (Genesis 9:11). Instead, He **warned** in 2 Peter 3:10: *“...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”*

“But,” you ask, “what about *now*?” Does God send natural calamities on us now?” In the Old Testament we read of God’s punishment of Egypt through the plagues (Exodus 7-11); we read of famine and drought (Amos 4:6,7) because of Israel’s disobedience. So God has repeatedly used nature as a tool, but in the cases mentioned, He sent prophets in advance to **warn** the people, begging them to turn from their wickedness. He made those ver-

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bal warnings so that they would know that their sins were the cause of their problems. His ultimate purpose was to save, not to destroy.

In the New Testament we read in Luke 13:1-5 of tragedies that befell people. Jesus' answer was a repudiation of the idea that God had brought these problems because the sufferers were evil. He urged all to repent of their sins, so that we will not perish in eternal destruction which is the inevitable consequence of sin.

Victims in the current disaster ask, **“Why? Why did God do this? What sins did we commit that were worthy of such punishment?”** Instead of accusing Him, let us realize that God is our Creator, that He loves His creation and wants us to come to Him as His children.

The disasters that strike the earth through the brokenness of nature are tragic. We grieve for the many who lose their lives, for the survivors who have lost loved ones, homes, possessions, jobs. All of these losses are heart-breaking, and they will leave deep scars.

“Why? Why did God do this? What sins did we commit that were worthy of such punishment?”

But good can come out of horror. Human hearts, whose basic emotions are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26), are stirred with a measure of God's compassion and His concern for His creation. How many millions of fellow-human beings have shared in the tragedy, and have given sacrificially in order to help relieve physical suffering? How many have prayed fervently for those who are suffering? How many others have even left the comfort of their own homes to travel at great expense to the devastated places, to aid in the recovery with their own sweat and toil?

The time of healing must come. Even now, the sun shines, the sea has returned to normal, the physical scars of the devastation are being removed. It will take time, but renewal will ease the pain, and the on-going demands of life will force victims to *look* forward and to *move* forward.

But, individually, those who are grieving can do some things to help alleviate their own pain.

- * First, think of God as a merciful Father who cares about you. How do we know our real importance to Him? By the price He has already paid for the forgiveness of our sins: *“He who did not spare His*

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own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). The question echoes in our minds: If God has already willingly given His most precious gift — His Son — for us, how can we doubt that He is eager to come to our aid in every other way?

* Second, think of the people all over the world who are trying to help ease the suffering of victims of the storm. Doctors and nurses have come from many places to treat the injured. Medicines, food, water, clothing, and many other necessities for daily life have been shipped in to devastated areas. Workers have brought their own backs and muscles, to work with whatever equipment might be available to clear the debris and begin rebuilding. Massive efforts are being made to erase the damage of the tsunamis as quickly as possible. This outpouring from around the world surely must bring comfort.

* Third, look to God's word for consolation. 1 Peter 5:6,7 says, *"...humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."* That special care has brought you this message of love, at the hands of one of His children. It is our desire, as members of the church of Christ, to be His eyes seeing your tears, His hands supplying your needs, His feet coming to your aid, to whatever degree that is possible.

* Fourth, this is a time for all of us to re-examine our own hearts and to set our priorities straight. So often, when things are going well and there are no major concerns or heartaches to deal with, we find ourselves preoccupied with the physical things of this world. We are often too busy *earning a living* to really *live*. Our time is spent with *things*, rather than with *God and family and those who need us*.

Seeing that in an instant all of our possessions can be swept away, let us be warned of the critical importance of putting our eternal welfare above our stomachs. Let us realize that love of family and the proper spiritual guidance of family are more important than all of our physical possessions. Above all, let us use this tragedy as the basis for a closer walk with God.



Betty Burton Choate works with her husband, J.C. Choate, in World Evangelism.

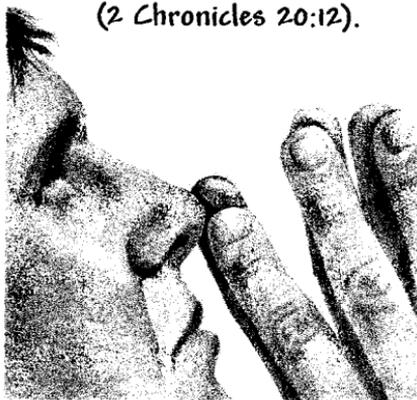
GOD IS IN CONTROL

Robert Swain

I like to think I'm in control. It's not that I think that there is no one else who can make good decisions or that I'm the greatest and the wisest. I think that I want to be in control because I don't like the feeling of being *out of control*. Most of us are that way, I believe. When things happen in our lives, we at least like to have a say in the outcome.

So what happens when suddenly you find that you're not in control? When things happen to you,

**"We have no power...
We don't know what to do,
but our eyes are upon You"
(2 Chronicles 20:12).**



your family or your world that you have no control over, what then? Most of us tend to get angry and look for someone to blame. Many times the first to be blamed for a catastrophe in your personal life or for some natural disaster will be God.

I cannot imagine living through such a life-changing event as a hurricane, a tsunami, a tornado or a flood. Equally so, it would be devastating to face cancer, a crippling disease, or the loss of a child. What do we do when we face events such as these in our lives — events over which we have no control?

There is a story in 2 Chronicles 20:1-13 about a king named Jehoshaphat. He was a good king and tried hard to do what was right. In chapter 19, verse 4 we are told that he went out among the people and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers. He tried to be an honest, honorable and good man. Still catastrophe came his way. The Moabite and Ammonite armies, along with other enemies of Judah, banded together to attack and destroy Jehoshaphat and his people.

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It would have been easy for the king of Judah to blame God. He had tried to be a good king, to lead his people righteously, yet God allowed this enemy to rise up to destroy him! He could've blamed God. Instead he did what we should do. Verse 3 says, "*And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord...*"

Instead of blaming God in times of trouble, that is the very time that we need to seek Him out and be near Him. In verse 4 it says that the entire country of Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord. They prayed. They worshipped. They approached the One who really is in control and asked for help. I am encouraged by verse 12, "*...For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.*"

You see, I like to think I'm in control, but I'm not. God is. When things happen in my life, I may not understand and I may not like it, but I do know one thing — God is in control. He is more powerful than the problems in my life, more powerful than the earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis that break our hearts. He is in control, and we can approach Him for His protection and love. That is what Jehoshaphat did. In Vs. 9 he prayed, "*If disaster comes upon us — sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine — we will*

stand before this temple and in your presence..." This king knew that he wasn't in control, and the only thing that he could do to make the situation better was to be near to God, who was in control. This is a good lesson for us all.

I am reminded of a man named Job who lost all of his children, all of his property and his health. Job was forced to live at the dump and was in such pain that he scraped his sores with a broken pot. His wife urged him to curse God and die, and his friends did not even recognize him. Through it all, Job chose to remain true to God. We know something that Job didn't know. We are told that the terrible devastation in his life was caused by Satan, not God. God never stopped loving him or having confidence in him. Job's story had a happy ending as did Jehoshaphat's. But happy ending or not, God is still God and He is in control.

The psalmist sang in Psalm 61:2-4. "*From the end of the earth I will cry to You. When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.*" †

Robert Swain is a part of the World Evangelism team and lives in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Did God Drown in the Tsunami?

J. Randal Matheny

When thousands of people perish in natural disasters like the tsunami that hit Asia on 26 December 2004, questions naturally arise. Why did this happen? Was this a direct punishment from God? If so, who was He punishing? And why? How could God allow such evil in the world as this, if He is loving and all-powerful? Does the presence of such bad things mean that God is not real?

For many centuries people have asked such questions. They are not new, although they become new to us when we see people suffer from natural disasters or when we ourselves are affected by them.

Our Assurance Is Shaken

Above all, such questions do not reflect badly upon the limits or deficiencies of God, but upon our own finiteness and inability to comprehend the greater issues of the universe. Science is helpless at such moments, human thoughts fail, man cannot even sense the arrival of the tsunami like so many animals that fled the low-lying areas hours before it made shore. For all our efforts, we are at the mercy of a world careening toward destruction. The movie that shows man saving his world from a meteor is not only fiction, but fantasy.

Many lives were lost in the tsunami, and we feel deeply our own vulnerability, but God did not drown in the tsunami! **What died in the waves were our assurance that life goes on as normal and our belief that today will be just like yesterday.** We must confess that we do not know **what will happen** or **why** many things happen. God's ways and purposes are beyond us. *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God"* (Deuteronomy 29:29, NASB). Through Isaiah, the Lord reminds us, *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:9).

But there is still sense to be made from the tsunami.

Sometimes God Explained

If God were to speak from Heaven and say, "I am doing this for this

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reason,” we would know. Sometimes God did reveal that He was the immediate cause of a disaster. The Bible says that “*the Lord hurled a great storm on the sea*” when Jonah fled from his presence (Jonah 1:4). God was directly behind that storm, with a specific purpose for causing it.

Likewise, through the prophecy of Joel, the Lord foretold that He would send a plague of locusts as punishment for the sins of Jerusalem and Judah (Joel 1:1-20). When God reveals His mind, then we may know! As the latter part of Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “... *but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*”

But God rarely identifies a natural disaster or occurrence with a special purpose of His.

No Special Meaning

Jesus said that, among other things, “*there will be famines and earthquakes*” (Matthew 24:7), but that these would not be signs of the end or of any immediate activity of God which would deserve the attention of the disciples. “*But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs*” (verse 8). So “for Jesus all these things were merely preliminary” (Jack P. Lewis, **The Gospel According to Matthew**, Part II [Sweet, 1976], p. 122).

This means that Jesus’ followers could not tie the famines and earthquakes to the direct action of God or to some purpose of His in history. Perhaps He **was** the immediate cause of a certain natural occurrence, which had behind it a divine reason, but it was not something that humans could discern or with which they should be concerned, in terms of God’s history of redemption.

How, then, should we consider the natural disasters that happen today?

When We Suffer

If they happen to us, we should consider that the suffering and damage we have experienced are not a punishment from God, but that they are a sign that this world has been injured by man’s sin and that our planet has been “*subjected to futility*” and “*groans*” in its present state (Romans 8:19-22). In this state, even innocents will suffer. The earth convulses because it will be destroyed, “*being reserved for fire,*” ... “*and the earth and its works will be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:7,10).

Aside from the immediate physical and emotional needs that may arise from an earthquake, tsunami, volcano, flood, famine or other natural occurrence, we must consider that the Earth is destined to be destroyed. The destruction we have witnessed, the suffering which we have experienced, is but a prelude to the final and definitive end of this world. We must prepare

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for eternity! If we live but for this world, woe to us! (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:19.)

If I have sought for God and obeyed His gospel, in the final day *“this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality”* (1 Corinthians 15:54). With faith in God and hope of receiving a *“kingdom which cannot be shaken”* (Hebrews 12:28), we may say with all confidence and courage:

*“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;
Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.”*
(Psalm 46.1-3)

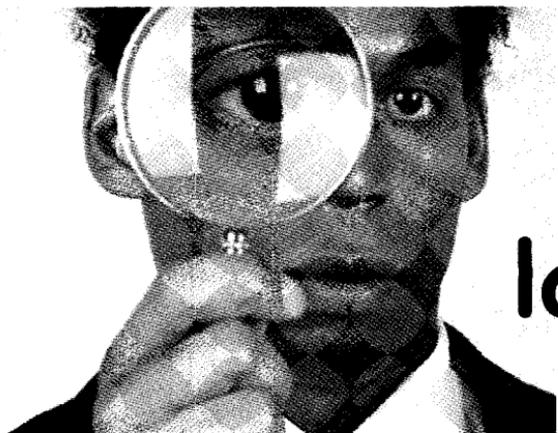
When Others Suffer

If the tragedies happen to others, our first concern should be to offer aid. On this occasion, that has been the response of many around the world, and this is right and proper. When Agabus prophesied in Antioch of a world-wide famine, that church, instead of debating *the problem of evil* or the *why* of natural disasters, immediately decided to help the Christians affected in Judea. *“And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea”* (Acts 11:29). So they fulfilled the spirit of Paul’s exhortation, *“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith”* (Galatians 6:10).

The greatest good we may do, of course, is to point others to the need for salvation beyond this life. Every opportunity should be taken to preach the gospel and share the blessed hope of eternal life with God. When the foundations of life are shaken, we may rightfully point to the arrival of the new heaven and new earth, where *“there is no longer any sea”* (Revelation 21:1). Every source of evil will be banished, and thus every reason for crying and sorrow will vanish (verse 4).

God did not drown in the tsunamis, nor did the waves wash away our hope. On the contrary, it proved once again the brevity of life, the fragility of our world, and the solidity of our faith in the God who loves and offers much more in eternal bliss. †

J. Randal Matheny preaches the gospel in Brazil and edits *Forthright Magazine* (www.forthright.net).



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The Tsunami



Reports on Tsunami Relief Efforts of the Church

We continue to be in contact with brethren in the areas affected by the tsunami of December 26, 2004. Knowing that you are concerned, we are including in this issue of **The Voice of Truth International** some of the reports we have received.

From Vernon Douglas (Swamy) in Tamil Nadu, India

The word 'tsunami' itself was new to many of us. Our local news channels reported nearly 3000 dead by midnight of December 26, and the counting was increasing. Immediately P.R. Swamy tried to contact all our preachers in the coastal areas. Except one or two, we were not able to get anyone, so we were getting worried. We decided to go as a team to see firsthand what was going on. Vernon Douglas, Joseph Ullahanan, Vivekanandan and John left on 30th December on this special trip. The route taken was via the west coast (Kerala side) down to the southernmost point of India and then onward along the east coast till Chennai and then back to Bangalore.

FROM THE HEART OF . . .

When we arrived at Alleppey (Kerala) in the early morning, we started hearing different people talking about tsunami and the death toll near that area to be nearly 200, with many missing. One eyewitness said that he saw the wave come and bury 20 people standing on the shore. We visited one Catholic center which had been converted into a refugee camp for those affected by the tsunami. We met a Catholic priest who had just come back from Tamil Nadu area after burying 143 dead bodies in a mass grave. While we were talking, many of the affected families from nearby areas started coming into the center in panic. By now we were very shaken up.

We proceeded to Trivandrum and then onward to Kanyakumari area. We halted for the night at Marthandam and ushered in the New Year with a quiet prayer for the victims in a small hotel room. The same day we took another preacher, King Solomon, in the morning and started meeting the other preachers. One preacher, Samuel Raj, had also just returned from Collachal area which was deeply affected. Boats had been thrown half a kilometer inland. Debris was there everywhere. Hundreds had been killed and many missing. He had gone to see if his contacts were all right, but he couldn't find them. Their homes were all destroyed, and he was totally distraught.

From there we went to Nagercoil area where our preacher, brother P. Selvaraj lives very near the point where the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal meet. Here the waves had come as high as 35 feet. Eyewitnesses said that just before the tsunami came, the sea had receded and people had



FROM THE HEART OF . . .

gone following the water into the sea when the tsunami suddenly came and created havoc in the area. Hundreds were immediately killed. All these people were tourists and locals who had gone for their ceremonial (Hindu) bathing.

All the members of the church were worshipping at their respective meeting places when the tsunami occurred. These meeting places are located inland from the beach area, so none of them were destroyed. Only fishermen folk live so close to the sea. None of our members were affected in any way, so far as we have been able to learn.

Swamy rang me on the cell phone and told me to visit a family in a village where 4 or 5 had died. They were relations of Shankar, one of our preachers in Bangalore. Their property had been damaged, but they had escaped.

We then proceed to Madurai and halted for the night. The next day being Sunday, we worshiped at Arapalayam church of Christ. One sister who had been baptized by Swamy had had her family affected. Her parents live in the coastal area of Cuddalore where the major damage had been done. She is studying in Madurai in an engineering college staying in a hostel. She is a Hindu covert, and all her hostel inmates had criticized her for having become a Christian. They even said that it was because she had become a Christian that such a calamity had struck her family. So we took Milton, the preacher from Madurai, and went to visit the place where her family stays.

The people there told us to go the Taluk office or the local administration office for information regarding the girl's family. The Minister of the area, along with the appointed I.A.S (bureaucrats), were seated in deep discussions, planning measures to prevent the spread of epidemics. The place was also filled with charity agencies from various parts of India. Truckloads of life-saving medicines from Bangalore were there. The place was a beehive of activity.

We were told to go to a particular refugee camp where victims from that particular village were housed. Crowds were everywhere, but the camp authorities told us that those people had gone back to their village to see the extent of damage that had been done. It was late and dark, but we just couldn't turn back without seeing these souls.

We followed the directions given and started on an unforgettable journey into the area just 30 meters from the sea. The way was dark and the roads were very badly damaged. On both sides of the road shattered fishing

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boats were lying. There was a stench all around. Bleaching powder had been strewn all around the places where the dead bodies had been taken. Everyone cautioned us against going any further. We did not heed their advice but went on. Along the way we saw the houses had been totally damaged. At a particular place a man was seated and crying looking at a mound of sand.

We saw a group of boys standing and went to them to enquire about Mr. K. Anjappan who is the father of the girl. One of the boys looked at us in a funny way and came to us and said, "I know him. Why do you want to meet him?" I said I was coming from Madurai and that his daughter had asked me to see how they were doing. He then said that Mr. Anjappan was his father and that they had had a very miraculous escape. He went to bring his family.



In the meantime, a few people gathered around us. Slowly they started telling their experiences. They were in tears. A lady carrying a baby came and said, "My two other daughters are dead. What will I do? Have you come to do any social service here? We don't need anything. Can you bring back our dead from the sea? We trusted the sea so much all our lives. We worshiped the sea. We prayed to it daily. Why did this happen to us? We can never go back to the sea again. The sea has betrayed us. We are not at all confident about the sea. The sea has cheated us."

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The boy came back with his father and mother, and we asked them what happened. They said that all of them were sitting in the house when the tsunami came. Theirs was a solid house, so they ran to the rooftop. The water rose up to the terrace level. Their boy had been carried away by the wave, about 500 meters. He clung to the branches of a tree and somehow managed to escape. All around them, household articles and bodies were floating by. Their other boy had been swept away, but somehow another person on another tree had put out his hand and caught him and saved him. Still one of their children is missing.

We gave our address and details and promised to return when we came back. The whole team by now was very much upset. We cut short our trip and came back to Bangalore. In actuality, thousands more than the news report have died. We have asked all our preachers to search for affected families who are connected with them and to keep sending us their reports.

From Philemon Rajah of Madurai

Brother, I am writing this letter since the mother of one of our Ellis Nagar church members, a blind brother, expired in Andaman and Nicobar islands. She worked in the government there and was a main support to this brother financially, for his daily living.

Since the Tsunami attacked the Andaman and Nicobar islands very badly, she was caught and died. Now our church member, this blind brother is helpless. We earnestly request you to kindly pray for him as he is in a very pathetic situation. He is even unable to go and attend his mother's burial because Andaman is far from India, and he would have to go by air.

We are concerned about this brother, because he used to often come with us to the ministry among the blind people and is active in the church.

From Andrew Banjarnahor in Indonesia

Today is a busy day for us in distributing things to refugee camps of tsunami from Aceh here in Medan. Yesterday we distributed noodles and mineral water, and some money we put in the envelopes with our brochures in two refugee camps among families of denominational people, and in Gunung Krakatau Metal, mostly Chinese.

Today we gave larger amounts; 70 rice sacks, each 10 kilograms, soap 144, peaches, sugar 100 kilograms, noodles 10 boxes, and aqua 10 boxes. We rented a pick-up truck to carry those things to the Chinese refugee camp.

Yesterday I told to the coordinator there, Mr. Akiong, that we are from the church of Christ, and asked if we can give some money in the envelopes,



along with a tract. He said *no* for money but instead we can give food and personal supplies, and he allowed us to distribute some Christian literature. So, we have a great opportunity to offer tracts and Bible Correspondence Courses, and they set a table for us. Some people come to our table asking for Bible lessons, and our mission team (Lingaro Halawa, Sitelli Buulele, Rajaguguk, Uli and myself) are ministering to them.

Mr. Akiong told me that all the refugees there *registered* 7000 people. 2000 are living in houses in surrounding areas, and 250 people without any link to families or friends stay in the camp itself. 70% are Buddhist, 30% denominational, and almost none are Muslim. In all of our brochures and BCC we stamped "Free Bible Course" with our address and also our worship and Bible Class schedule so that they can visit us. Some of the leaders thanked us, and I told them that this is the benevolent work we are doing in showing the love of Christ, in a combined effort from US churches and national churches in Indonesia.

From Bill McDonough of Partners in Progress in Indonesia

I'm in Medan, Indonesia where all the posturing is being done to help the victims in Indonesia. Meeting with other NGO's, UN agencies, Government, etc.

There are 45+ congregations in the Island of Nias, which is one of the

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two islands the wave hit, and since it is the lesser of the two, little is being done to help them. We are working through very capable brethren there to help. Some of the church members lost their homes, hundreds of others did also. Immediate relief is being given, but again, they need pots, pans, dishes, lanterns, cooking fuels, and brethren are distributing these widely. They are meeting with local officials and families and will begin helping to rebuild the small homes. A house can be rebuilt for \$2400 to \$3000, and these will house ten to fifteen people. So we will be doing some of that as the brethren determine who and where the greatest needs are.

They are already thinking evangelism, and we have tried to help them see how they can do this through the relief effort, with good capable brethren. The man heading up the effort for us is a retired Government Auditor who preaches full time, living on his retirement income. He knows everyone, is dedicated to the Lord and is very capable.

From Steve Cate and Jim Karl, Nias in Indonesia

I arrived in Jakarta on Wednesday afternoon at 3 PM. It took until 8 PM to reach my house because of flooding. This is the rainy season and we do expect rain, but here in my neighborhood we have been having torrential storms every night. The roof leaks, but so far no major water inside the house.

Nias is my goal, and I hope to visit the island next week; but in the mean time here is part of a report from Jim Karl with whom I'll be working. He is bringing a team of doctors and medical care professionals to Nias in March. I'll be one of his translators or evangelists or ditch diggers or whatever is needed.

As I supposed, and according to Jim, the damage to Nias is underreported in the media, and there is a great need there. The money sent to me will go to help our brethren first. We have nearly 4000 brethren on the island in about 49 congregations. I think more congregations have been established since my last count. Since I was the first missionary from churches of Christ to visit the island and baptize people there, my heart is with this effort.

Here is Jim's report:

"Yesterday was another WOW day. We spent most of the day at the military post at the airports waiting for military transport to Banda Aceh. That does not sound very WOW does it? While at the airport the President of Indonesia came through to visit with the Indonesian military men and women. He came to me, stopped, and we shook hands as I introduced

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myself. I told him of our planned mission to Nias. I knew he had visited Nias a few days before, so I asked if he did not think the destruction was worse than reported to date. He replied, "Much worse," and thanked us for our planned medical team and wished us the very best. I took his picture and told him maybe I could make him a movie star, but he felt that he had a job already.

"I also met with the Indonesian Foreign Minister two different times. He indicated that he wanted a report of our work after our first medical team trip. We were not able to go to Banda Aceh as planned, which was okay with me. My heart is in Nias, plus there is a great need for us to be there. Aceh is a nearly 100% Muslim province with very little opportunity to teach, and team safety is a concern there. Nias is 85-90% "Christian" island with about a million people and is very open to teaching. They received us with open arms, and there is no major concern about team safety."

From Salvador Cariaga, Philippines

I am back in Cebu for a brief time with the family before rejoining the MARCH for CHRIST group to Sri Lanka next week. My brother, Dr. Sam Cariaga and 39 other Filipino and American medical and church workers will leave tomorrow afternoon. Their India schedule was cancelled because the government refused visas to the whole team. The organizers, led by Chito Cusi, suspected that it is because the group is a Christian-based relief effort. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, waived the fees and welcomed the coming of the Medical Mission. Since that country is the second-hardest hit by the tsunami, the need there is greater anyway. A local church is working in partnership with the relief effort.

I missed the opportunity to join another relief mission last week in Luzon. My cousins, Bert and Jun Patricio delivered boxes of goods donated by our Cebu churches. Cash donated by Cebu and US churches through me was also given to brethren who were affected by the major typhoon last month. A few WBS students were also helped. Over 1,400 people were killed in that calamity and thousands were left homeless. This is Jun's second trip there. His first one was with MARCH a few weeks ago where they served meals and provided medical attention to the victims. He thinks that the church relief efforts are paving the way for us to plant new churches in that area.

We thank God for the hearts of His children who have been stirred by the pathetic plight of these people. May many souls be brought to the eternal home through these efforts of agape love. †

We Need Your Help Now!!!

Brethren, we are constantly receiving requests for **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. They come from Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, India, Philippines, and many other countries. But it costs money to print this magazine and it costs money to send them out. What can we do? Will we turn a deaf ear to these requests? Or will we respond and put into their hands the kind of literature that will teach them the truth, along with extra copies to share with their friends? Don't tell me that no one is interested, that no one will respond to the gospel. My brethren, there are millions right now who are calling out for help.

We have printed over 65,000 copies of one issue of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**, but our goal is to print over 100,000 copies of each issue. With that volume they will cost only 50 cents a copy. Our printer will package and address them for \$3.00 per bag, and then the postage for 35 copies in an M-Bag is \$11.00. That means that we can print and ship one box of the magazines to a foreign address for approximately \$35.00, providing literature for 35 people (times the ten that will read each copy — 350!). Can you as a congregation or an individual afford **\$35.00 a month** to help us send **4 boxes a year** (it's a quarterly) of the magazine to someone who is pleading with us to receive it?

Will they read them? Will they share them? 100 per cent, yes. We are doing the work to print them. Will you help us to send them? Our heart cries out with theirs to be heard. We await your response. Please send **\$35.00 a month**, beginning *today*.

To help with this particular need, please send your checks to

**THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
Box 72, Winona, MS 38967**

For Subscriptions only:

(Return this form in an envelope, along with your check, to the following address, stating your wishes.)

**THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
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Dear Brethren:

I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. **My address is given below.**

I want to order the complete set of volumes in print (44 issues) for the reduced price of \$2.00 per copy. **My address is given below.**

Please send special prices for WBS teachers and their students.

I want to MAKE A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION of **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL**. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. **The address is given below.**

I want to send \$25.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed. Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way.

We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world.

We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to congregations in mission fields in the US.

As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

This congregation wants to have 500 copies (for \$500, plus shipping) special-printed of the next issue, with our (or our missionary's) address, to be shipped directly to us or to him, as per instructions.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____



ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search — 45 (from page 27)

1. That he had lived in all good conscience before God until that day.
2. To strike him on the mouth.
3. He began to explain that for the hope of the resurrection from the dead — which the Pharisees believed but the Saducees denied — he was being charged and tried.
4. That they found no fault in Paul, and that they did not want to be found fighting against God,
5. He was afraid that Paul would be pulled to pieces, so he went down and rescued him by force and took him into the barracks.
6. *Testified; Jerusalem; bear witness; Rome.*
7. Not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.
8. To suggest that the commander bring Paul again to the council, on the pretext of hearing more from him, but they would kill him en route.
9. Paul's sister's son.
10. He asked a centurion to take his nephew to the commander; no.
11. He let the young man depart, instructing him to tell no one what he had revealed to the commander.
12. Two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearsmen.
13. They were to leave under cover of night (at the third hour), and Paul was to be mounted on an animal, so that he could reach Caesarea and the governor, Felix, in safety.
14. A letter, recounting the history of Paul's case.
15. That he would hear his case when his accusers had also come down.
16. Prayers.



Sarah

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



Photographs from Thailand, Indonesia and India, showing the devastating effects of the tsunami

Front Cover: A lone figure at the site of a mass grave in South India.