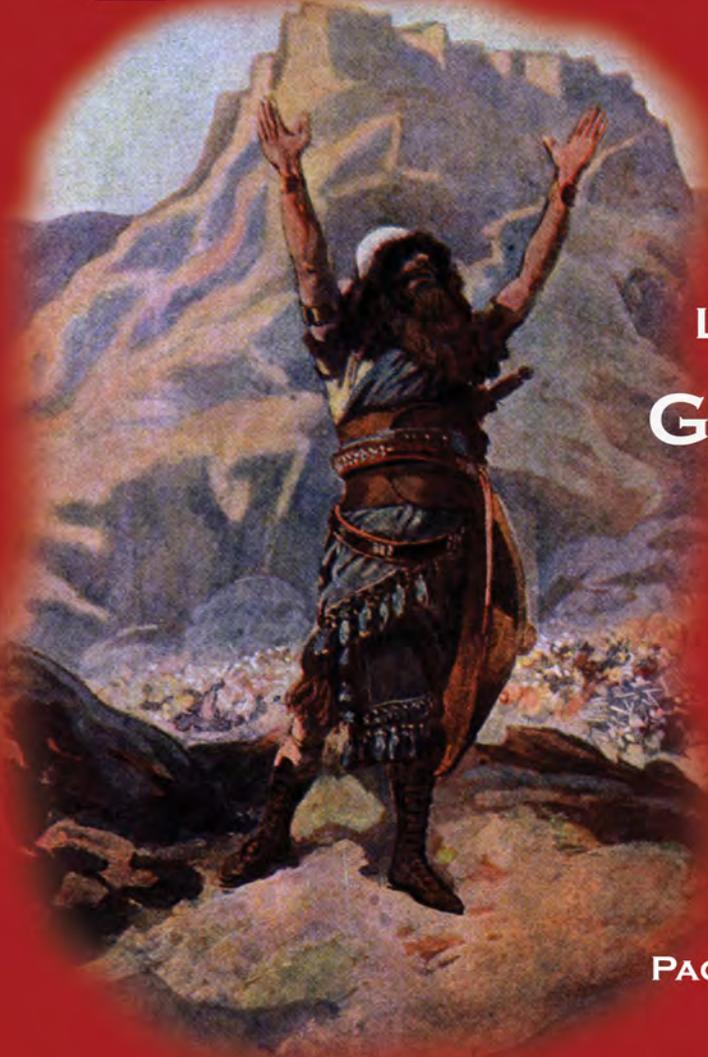


VOLUME SEVENTY-ONE

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



WE'RE
LOOKING
FOR
GIDEON
AND HIS
300!

PAGE 103

Dear Mother:

I know I didn't say it enough, but

THANK YOU for the time you took to teach me about God.

**THANK YOU for teaching me about right and wrong,
and good and evil.**

**THANK YOU for your demonstration of love, compas-
sion, and concern for others.**

**THANK YOU for caring enough to punish me when I
deserved/needed it.**

**THANK YOU, too, for exercising tolerance, grace, and
forgiveness when I deserved punishment.**

THANK YOU for teaching me to love my country.

**THANK YOU for teaching me humility, steadfastness
and the value of honor.**

**THANK YOU for loving me even with all my faults and
shortcomings.**

THANK YOU for being patient with me.

THANK YOU for your unselfishness.

THANK YOU for being a model of Christianity in action.

THANK YOU for loving and caring for Daddy.

**THANK YOU for loving and caring for your family when
times were tough financially.**

THANK YOU for all those long, hard days in the garden.

THANK YOU for being my Mother.

**Your son.
(Curtis Burton)**

The Original Church

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

(1 Corinthians 12:11-13)

...so we, being many, are one body in Christ,
and individually members of one another.

(Romans 12:4-6)

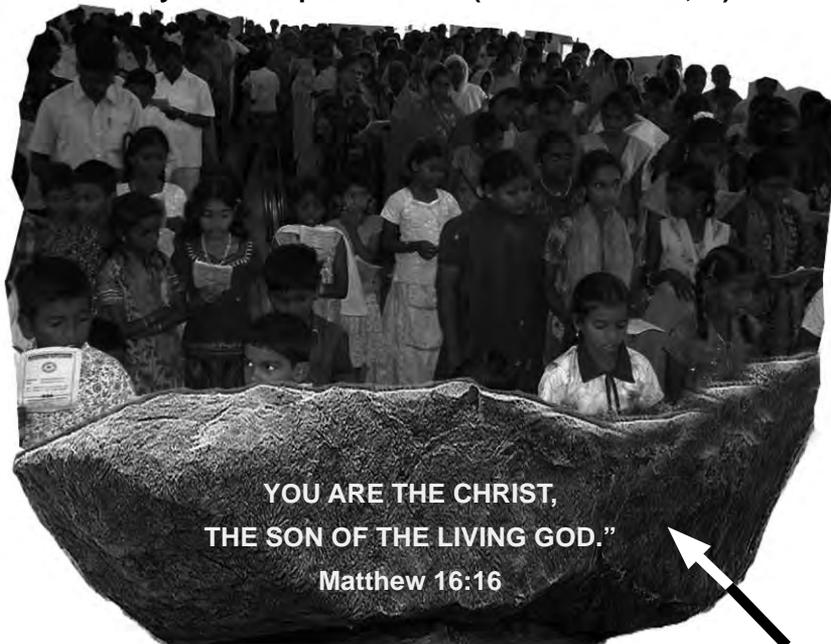
Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

(1 Corinthians 12:26-28)

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning,
the firstborn from the dead, that in all things

He may have the preeminence (Colossians 1:17,18).



YOU ARE THE CHRIST,
THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.”

Matthew 16:16

“... ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES
OF HADES SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.” Matthew 16:18

The Circle of Salvation

**INSIDE IS
GOD'S FAMILY**

Ephesians
1:22,23; Ro-
mans 16:16;
1 Corinthians
12:13



**JESUS is the door into
the Family of God:
John 10:9**



**Be BURIED with
Christ in BAPTISM:
Romans 6:3,4**



**CONFESS your faith in Jesus:
Matthew 10:32**

**REPENT — turn away from sin:
Luke 13:3**

**BELIEVE with all your heart:
John 8:24**



HEAR the Gospel: Romans 10:17

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



A Tribute to Eulene Ramsey

Byron Nichols

The Bible is full of unsung heroes and heroines, some of them with names that are quite familiar to us all, but many others who were equally outstanding servants of God have been unknown for many centuries.

From our human standpoint, these stalwarts of the faith, who contributed so much to the advancement of the cause of God and Christ, should have been identified by name so that they could have been specifically and individually appreciated by every generation that has succeeded them. However, God's wisdom is far superior to that of man, and He chose to let them remain anonymous. Of course, the fact that we don't know their names does not diminish at all the greatness of their service or the beauty of their humility and selflessness.

Another such wonderful servant of God has concluded her stay on earth, and she is deserving of our great gratitude and appreciation. **Eulene Ramsey** very willingly gave of herself in working for more than fourteen years behind the scenes with *The Voice of Truth International* and the World Evangelism effort. She contributed her skills in a truly significant way to further enhance the work being done by means of these teaching endeavors.

Eulene and her fine husband, Darrell, previously lived in Texas for a number of years, and for about fifteen of those years they had been very involved in teaching the Bible through the **World Bible School** program to students in Africa. They had even made plans to spend full-time in mission work after they retired from their secular jobs.

Before they retired, Darrell made two trips to Ghana in West Africa to do follow-up work with their WBS students. On his second trip, however, he



Eulene Ramsey
February 5, 1928
December 13, 2011

contracted a tropical disease that proved to be quite serious, resulting in much hospitalization and being in a coma several times. His situation was so severe and the outlook so dismal that his doctors were convinced that he would never be able to walk again. Darrell had to take early retirement, and Eulene also took early retirement so that she could better care for him. Fortunately, Darrell was able to slowly regain his mobility to some degree. In the process of her caring for him, Eulene became afflicted with severe arthritis. As a result, for the rest of her years she endured nearly ceaseless pain in many of her joints, especially her hips, feet, and spine. Many surgeries provided only very minimal relief at best.

The Ramseys had been looking forward to retiring and supporting themselves in a full-time mission effort, but their health problems greatly reduced their opportunities. In their continuing effort to find some way that they could contribute to the spreading of the Gospel into mission areas, they contacted the Choates, and this led to their soon selling their house in Texas and moving to Winona, Mississippi, so that Eulene could begin donating her services for the next several years.

Her bookkeeping and typing skills were put to good use, and she would also soon be useful in proofreading much of the material that would be printed as books and magazines, tracts, etc. for use in teaching the Gospel literally all over the world! All of this was done by a godly woman who not only did not **care** that she was not in the spotlight – she did not **want** to be in the spotlight. As far as Eulene was concerned, she was richly rewarded by knowing that what she was doing was important, that it needed to be done, and that she **could** and **would** do it. Here was a lady who subscribed to and endorsed Paul's admonition in Colossians 3:23, "*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.*" Those of us who knew of her ongoing pain and discomfort were made to marvel at her determination and her ability to seemingly push the pain to a remote area of her brain and forge ahead as if all was well with her.

Very few of our readers were privileged to ever meet or know Eulene Ramsey, and I regret that. My wife Gay and I have counted it a real joy to have Eulene and Darrell among our most special friends in Christ. It is my judgment that it is no exaggeration at all to say that she would fit very nicely into Hebrews, Chapter Eleven. †



Blessings as a Sign of God's Favor

Jerry Bates

“I know I am right before God, because He is blessing me.” I’m sure you have heard people speak similar words. In the minds of most people, since their lives are going well (good health, prosperity, family, etc.), they assume that God is blessing them and therefore they are right with Him. Furthermore, some say that it really doesn’t matter whether one is a believer in God. Even if people worship a pagan god, the reasoning is the same. If my life is good, surely I am right. However, that may be a false assumption. A prosperous life is not always a sign of God’s favor, and the reverse is also true.

This attitude is not new. Throughout the centuries people have been looking at the success of evil men and wondering why such is so. The Psalmist wrote in 73:3, “*For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*” Even faithful Jeremiah questioned, “*Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?*” (Jeremiah 12:1). The friends of Job thought that since Job was suffering terribly, then surely he had committed some great sin. However, such was not the case. His suffering was not due to his sin.

The Bible is filled with examples of people who were very successful from a material standpoint, yet it is also clear that those same souls were not righteous in the sight of God. Consider Omri. He was one of the more powerful kings of the nation of Israel. He reigned for 12 years and was wealthy, respected, and feared by surrounding nations. He built the city of Samaria, which remained the capital of Israel for the rest of the nation’s existence. From a material standpoint he appeared quite successful, yet God’s verdict was entirely different. “*Omri did*

what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did more evil than all who were before him” (1 Kings 16:25).

Ahab, Omri’s son, was one of the longer reigning kings of Israel (22 years). Nevertheless, he was also very wicked, even marrying the depraved Jezebel. Solomon was possibly the wisest and richest man the world has ever known, yet at least for a good part of that time, he stood in God’s disfavor, because his wives turned his heart away from the true God to other gods and his heart was not truly devoted to God (1 Kings 11:4). Many foreign nations were frequently more blessed materially and exercised great power over Israel and Judah. These worshippers of heathen gods habitually credited their success to their false gods, but again, it was a false assumption. For example, King Saul was killed by the Philistines in battle, and they attributed this success to Dagon, even putting his head and armor in their temple to Dagon. However, the Bible plainly declares that *“Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the work of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance.”* (1 Chronicles 10:13). Thus, Saul died due to his own sin, not because of the righteousness of the Philistines or the greater power of Dagon. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 8:11, *“Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”* We have repeatedly seen the truthfulness of that statement.

The Psalmist declares, *“He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities”* (Psalm 103:10). Psalm 145:9 states that *“the Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.”* Christ encourages us to love our enemies, because *“he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil”* (Luke 6:35). God sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). James further proclaims that God gives generously to all without reproach. We would like to think that evil men always receive evil things from God, and good men receive good things. Unfortunately, such is not true.

It is clear that God does not act like we think He should, and thus, we must not assume that a blessing automatically equates to favor. The author of Psalm 73 questioned why the wicked seemed to prosper until *“he ... went into the sanctuary of God...”* (73:6), that is, until he considered the ultimate end of the wicked. Yes, often through the turn of events, or worldly wisdom, evil men prosper in this world, but such will not always be true. Eventually, evil men will face the wrath of God in judgment. *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* (Hebrews 10:31). Earthly blessings are very temporary and are nothing compared to the permanence of God. Multitudes continue to believe the false supposition that blessings equate to favor. May all of us seek to dispel this false notion that undoubtedly will send millions to their own destruction. †



Worshipping Almighty God Acceptably and with Godly Fear

Louis Rushmore

“Holy, Holy, Holy” is a song that I have loved dearly since my early days as a Roman Catholic; I was delighted when after becoming a member of the Lord’s one true church of the Bible that this song is sung by Christians as well. Aside from the inherited aspect of the Catholic religion that intertwines with family and heritage, an additional and significant attraction to Catholicism is its reverence for God in worship. The Catholic Church achieves this reverential atmosphere by dubbing their auditoriums as holy sanctuaries. Thus, stepping into a Catholic Church building is viewed essentially as stepping into the very presence of God Himself. (Catholics officially bless the church building to make it holy, and if a Catholic Church building is not used any more for worship, they officially remove the blessing.) However, the Catholic Church has opted for an unscriptural and physical stimulus to prompt its members to exhibit awe and reverence for God. Instead, true Christians ought to manifest genuine awe and reverence for God, especially in Christian worship, without resorting to unscriptural and physical motivations; the Christian incentive for correctly demonstrating awe and reverence for God should be spiritual conversion to Christianity.

God is a Spirit, and we are obligated to “*worship Him in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24). Because He is God, He deserves the best we have to offer Him in Christian worship, and God deserves to be worshipped in His own appointed way. Worship of God is coming into the very presence of our Creator. Therefore, we should not take our worship of Almighty God lightly. The meetinghouses in which we worship are not holy — they are not sanctuaries like Catholics view their assembly halls, but instead, the people — not the building — are the holy church (assembly) (Acts 2:47). Hence, when we enter into worship, God is present with us; Jesus promised to be with His apostles when they convened,

and we commonly believe that He is likewise present with us when Christians assemble, any number, any place (Matthew 18:20). Furthermore, through our worship, we open up a channel into the very throne room of God; we are no longer merely in our auditoriums, homes or other places from which we worship God.

The attitude with which we worship God matters. The word “spirit” in the phrase “*worship Him in spirit and truth*” of John 4:24 means “mental disposition” (*Strong’s*). Hence, one’s attitude is certainly part of the active part of worshipping God. While the child of God must worship God correctly in outward form, he must worship God correctly in his mind, too, for his worship to be acceptable to God (Matthew 22:37). An improper attitude in worship manifests itself sometimes in the outward form of worship as it did among the Jews in Malachi 1:6-13. Remembering Who God is and that He created all that is should cause great reverence and awe as we consider Him (Psalm 33:6-9). “Reverend” is the name of God (Psalm 111:9).
Meaningless participation is not true worship of God!

God deserves (and demands) our reverential fear of Him (Hebrews 12:18-29). Always and in all places, but especially in worship to Him, God deserves our reverential fear; “*Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him*” (Psalm 33:8). The word “fear” means “to revere”. The word “awe” means “to shrink, fear (as in a strange place)” (*Strong’s*). It is a strange place for mortal, fallible man to be in the very presence of his Creator and God! Especially Christians need to make sure that when we stand in God’s presence that He does not become angry with us; “*Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?*” (Psalm 76:7). “*For our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:29) and “*a jealous God*” (Deuteronomy 4:24). Even Jesus Christ will visit disobedient souls with “*flaming fire*” upon His Second Coming (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Through our worship, we come into the very presence of God in heaven. Have we forgotten Who the object of our worship is, described in Job 37:22 as possessing “*terrible [or awe-inspiring] majesty*”? Has it escaped us that the Godhead is magnificent, all-powerful and so far superior to puny humans? “*... O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keeps covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments*” (Nehemiah 1:5). “*O Lord, the great and dreadful God*” (Daniel 9:4). How have we come to the point that in our assemblies we dare to be so easily distracted from focusing our complete attention on praising, magnifying, and glorifying God? “*And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul*” (Deuteronomy 10:12). Has worship become an inconsequential matter to us, and have we forgotten that “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Hebrews 10:31)?

To come into the very presence of God is an awesome, whole body trembling experience. Picture Israel at the base of Mt. Sinai when God descended to the top of the mountain (Exodus 19:16-20; Hebrews 12:18-29). We today, too, ought to be engulfed in an atmosphere of awe of our God when we come near to worship Him. Do you show by your demeanor in the worship assembly the realization that worshipping Almighty God is a serious matter and a privilege reserved today for faithful Christians? Christians, of all people, ought to be those who demonstrate solemnity in worship of God! “*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him*” (Psalm 89:7). “*Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified...*” (Leviticus 10:3). When we worship God, we come before the very throne of God; Isaiah 6:1-4 and Revelation 4:1-11 picture for us the throne room of Almighty God.

Consequently, there are several things that we should **not** do during our worship of the Great, Creator God. Christian worship must be orderly (1 Corinthians 14:33,40). One person speaks at a time in the Christian assembly (1 Corinthians 14:31). God will hold us accountable for infractions in Christian worship as He held the Corinthians accountable for their worship abuses in 1 Corinthians, chapters 11 and 14. Therefore, Christian worship is not a time for worldly distractions. Preaching is not an optimum time to catch up on one’s rest and go to sleep. Prayer is not a time during which we ought to be talking and coming and going — we are talking to God. Christian worship is not a time for writing notes, thinking about the next meal, or other worldly distractions.

We are not merely onlookers in Christian worship, but we are participants in worship of our God. The prayer prayed is our prayer! The songs sung are our songs. The sermon preached is our sermon. Above all, we must remember that we are in the very throne room of God — He is our audience as we worship Him. Surely, we do not need some artificial motivation like a Catholic sanctuary to foster in us awe and reverence for God when we worship Him. Surely, we can muster from within ourselves the awe and reverence we ought to have for God — as we “*worship Him in spirit and in truth*”. If not, our improper attitudes for worshipping God will certainly manifest themselves in the outward form of our worship as it did with the Jews about whom God complained in the Book of Malachi. †

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What About the Trinity?

Travis L. Quertermous

Fredrick Power once said of the Trinity, “The arithmetic of heaven is beyond us.” Many people feel the same way about the doctrine of the Trinity and thus reject it or attempt to redefine it because they do not fully understand it. Our English word “Trinity” comes from a Latin word meaning “three”. This word has been used to describe the Godhead because the Bible teaches that there is one God, i.e., one divine nature, shared by three distinct persons known as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Even though the word Trinity is not in the Bible, the concept is definitely there. Scripture teaches that the Father is God (1 Corinthians 8:5), the Son is God (Hebrews 1:8), and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3,4). Yet the Bible also teaches there is but one God. In Deuteronomy 6:4 Moses said, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*” How can God be **one** and yet **three** at the same time? One ancient illustration to help us understand the Trinity is the clover. If you hold a clover in your hand, how many flowers do you have? Just one. Yet how many petals does it have? It has three petals. So we have one flower with three separate petals, yet all related to one another inseparably. Even so with God — there is one divine nature shared by three inseparable but distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. †

Travis L. Quertermous preaches for the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

Thought for the Day

In happy moments, praise God.
In difficult moments, seek God.
In quiet moments, worship God.
In painful moments, trust God.
In EVERY moment, thank God.

GOD

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

Wayne Barrier

The revelation of Jesus to the apostle John (Revelation 1:1,11) records Jesus *“Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.”* John 1:1-5, says *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”* John 9:10-12, *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”*

Man, all life, and the world are the creation of God. God created the beginning of the world we know. We were created for His purpose. Consider Psalm 100, *“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”*

God created us to acknowledge His place as our Lord and God. We are like sheep that need a shepherd for survival. We are to express our sincere thanks to Him for His love, mercy, care, and grace. We should praise and honor Him.

Just as he created the beginning, God controls the end of all things. Man is not immortal. We all face death, and the entire world — including man — faces the end of physical existence. Consider 2 Peter 3:10, *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”*

God controls everything, including the end of time, and the end will come as a thief in the night. After the destruction of the world, man will go before God for judgment to determine each person’s eternal destiny. Revelation 20:12,15

GOD

states, “*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*”

The faithful believer will be rewarded with a home in heaven (Revelation 21:1-7), and non-believers will be punished with everlasting punishment (Revelation 21:8-9). Everyone who has ever lived will be judged (Matthew 25:31-34).

God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, created *the beginning* for mankind and this world, and God will determine *the end*. We are blessed with the opportunity to live in submission to Him and prepare to face him in judgment at the end of time. We, then, can live forever in heaven with God and His son. Jesus died to make our salvation possible. He loves us and wants us to be with him eternally. *Are you ready for the end?* †

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

Love Beyond Compare

Harry Presley

I woke one night and looked above
Into a twinkling starry sky
And marveled that God’s endless love
Should come to one as small as I.

When there are galaxies up there
With measurements beyond the mind
And yet that love beyond compare
Was sent instead to humankind.

The Heavens march without an end
And we’re so fragile, and so small
Why did that boundless love descend
On those most miniscule of all?

Our God so loved the souls He made
Despite the stain of Eden’s curse
His love in Jesus was conveyed
To man, above this universe.

GOD

Turn the Spirit Loose

Jack Harriman

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

The Spirit's convicting, directing, and leading involves a teacher. The eunuch could not understand without a teacher (Acts 8:31). Paul taught Timothy to teach others to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). If every home in Russia possessed a Bible in their own language, it would not result in many being convicted of sin and walking after the Spirit. They would still need teachers. The work of the Spirit is greatly limited without a teacher.

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

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

This was effective for four reasons. First, he showed that it was clearly biblical. Second, he made it clearly understandable. Third, he showed that everyone could obey it here and now. Fourth, he showed the practicality of it. He made it possible for the Spirit to work in a powerful way.

How can we make it possible for the Holy Spirit to convict sinners and lead Christians in the way of the Lord? Teach them His Word in the most logical, understandable way possible. Show them they can and must obey it immediately. Bring them face to face with the Lord. Take them to heaven and then take them to hell. Strip them of every excuse. Show them how practical their obedience will be. The better we can do this, the better the Spirit can work.

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

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



God Is Bigger Than Your Laboratory Experiments

Brad Harrub, Ph.D.

One of the reasons atheists have been so successful in emptying out church pews is because they have convinced at least two generations that everything must be proven using the scientific method. From an early age, students are taught that if you cannot see, touch, taste, smell, or hear it, then “it” does not exist. Those who have stiffened their necks against God recognize that He exists beyond scientific measure — and thus, our young people feel that it is impossible to prove His existence.

While it is true that God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and we cannot prove His existence using the five senses, we can use other intellectual means, such as logic and reason, to prove His existence. Consider how few church pews would be empty if every single child reared in a Christian home was diligently taught the following proofs for God’s existence.

Seven Ways to Prove the Existence of God

1. Every Creation Must Have a Creator (*cosmological argument*)

It doesn’t take a special telescope to prove that the universe exists. An upward glance on a clear night is a concrete reminder of this scientific fact. The reasonable question remains: “From whence did the universe originate?” In reality, there are only three options: (1) it is eternal; (2) it created itself from nothing; or (3) it was created.

Atheists and evolutionists would have students believe that the universe is eternal; however, that does not fit the scientific data. We know today that the universe is expanding, which is a clear indication it had a beginning. Additionally, any sane, unbiased scientist will further admit that it is ludicrous to suggest that all of the matter in the universe created itself from nothing. It is a self-evident truth that something cannot come from nothing. (If someone wants to argue this fact, I would love to sell him some “nothing.”) Since something now exists, this indicates that something has existed forever. These truths leave only one possibility — the universe was created. An eight-year-old child can recognize

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that something now exists. As such, it must follow that something has existed forever. That “something” must therefore be responsible for creating the universe. That “something” was God.

2. Every Design Must Have a Designer (teleological argument)

If design is found in nature, then by definition there must have been a designer. As such, Nobel Laureate Francis Crick, codiscoverer of the molecular structure of DNA, admonished, “Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved” (as written in *What Mad Pursuit*). The reason they must keep that in mind is because the design we observe today is one more proof that God exists.

Consider the design of the earth. How can chance explain the earth’s position in the following: (1) the right type of galaxy; (2) the right location within that galaxy; (3) the odds of being near the right sun; (4) being the right distance from the sun; (5) having the right rotation rate and proper tilt; (6) possessing enough water; and (7) having the right atmospheric conditions to sustain life? And that is just the beginning! For instance, in 1981 *Science Digest* reported that the earth moves in its orbit around the sun, departing from a straight line by only one-ninth of an inch every eighteen miles. If it departed by one-eighth of an inch, we would come so close to the sun that we would be incinerated; if it departed by one-tenth of an inch, we would find ourselves so far from the sun that we would all freeze to death. An honest evaluation of the universe quickly reveals design. Design demands a designer.

3. Codes Require Someone to Program the Code

Think logically...we spend millions of dollars on the SETI (the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) project, looking for some type of code or sign of intelligence from outer space. Scientists contend that any code or signal from space would indicate that there is intelligent life out there. Yet our own DNA is disregarded as just a product of evolution. Our own DNA code that to unravel required more than 13 years, hundreds of labs, and millions of research dollars is chalked up as merely a by-product of some cosmological explosion. The very existence of such complex DNA demonstrates that we must have had a code-programmer.

4. Laws Require a Lawgiver

Anyone reading these words has experienced firsthand natural laws such as

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the law of momentum. Every morning when we get out of bed, we never question whether our feet will go up or down, thanks in part to the law of gravity. These laws were put into place at creation, and their very existence allows us to live in an ordered and somewhat predictable environment. No one can honestly argue that these laws exist, but the question remains from whence did they come? Laws require a lawgiver. It is illogical to ascribe time and chance as the causative factors for producing these laws. Once again, their very existence points toward a Creator. *“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy”* (James 4:12).

5. The Law of Cause and Effect

For every material effect, there must be an adequate cause that existed prior to that effect. Imagine walking through the ruins of a massive tornado, only to hear a news reporter blame all of the destruction on a butterfly that was flying out of control. No one in his right mind would believe such foolishness. A butterfly is not an adequate cause to leave that kind of effect. The universe exists, so the question becomes what was the cause? Hebrews 3:4 records, *“For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.”* Some might question, *“Alright, then what was the cause of God?”* This scientific law demands that for every material (or physical) effect there must be an adequate cause. God is a Spirit and is therefore not bound by this law.

6. The Existence of Morals (anthropological argument)

Mankind, unlike the animals, has a moral code. Where did it come from? Imagine visiting more than 10 different island populations that were completely isolated from one another...and learning that they all possessed laws regarding murder and adultery. Furthermore, each group viewed things like lying and stealing as wrong. Where did these independent groups come up with such a similar moral code?

It is impossible for matter — by itself — to evolve a system of moral “right” and “wrong”. Yet, man recognizes right and wrong. The question then arises, from whence did morals originate? There are really only two options that could adequately explain the existence of morals — either they were conjured up and created by man, or they originated from God.

Consider the plight of atheists. They admit morals exist — otherwise they wouldn’t have a problem with you murdering their family members. However, they refuse to acknowledge a belief in God. As such, they must contend that

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morals arose from man. The question then becomes, who gets to decide what behaviors are right and which are wrong? Isn't evolution all about the "survival of the fittest"? So if I decide a certain behavior will allow me to survive better, shouldn't I participate in it — even if it hurts you? For instance, what would be the problem with slicing a coworker's tires before an interview if both individuals were applying for the same job?

The only option that makes logical sense is that humans have adopted God's standard for right and wrong. God's unchanging nature allows our morals to be recognized as absolute standards for all situations. Only God is eternal (Psalm 90:2; 1 Timothy 1:17). Only God is holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). Only God is just and righteous (Psalm 89:14). And only God is forever consistent (Malachi 3:6). The existence of a worldwide system of morals is excellent proof that God exists.

7. Communication Requires a Communicator

Consider that every single day humans all over the world look at symbols (which we call letters) and use those symbols to form words. We then string those words together in both the written and spoken form — allowing humans to communicate and build on knowledge. How is it that man is the only animal with this unique ability? In fact, a quick examination of Genesis 2 reveals that God created man with the ability to communicate before Eve was even formed. Communication is yet one more example that there is a God.

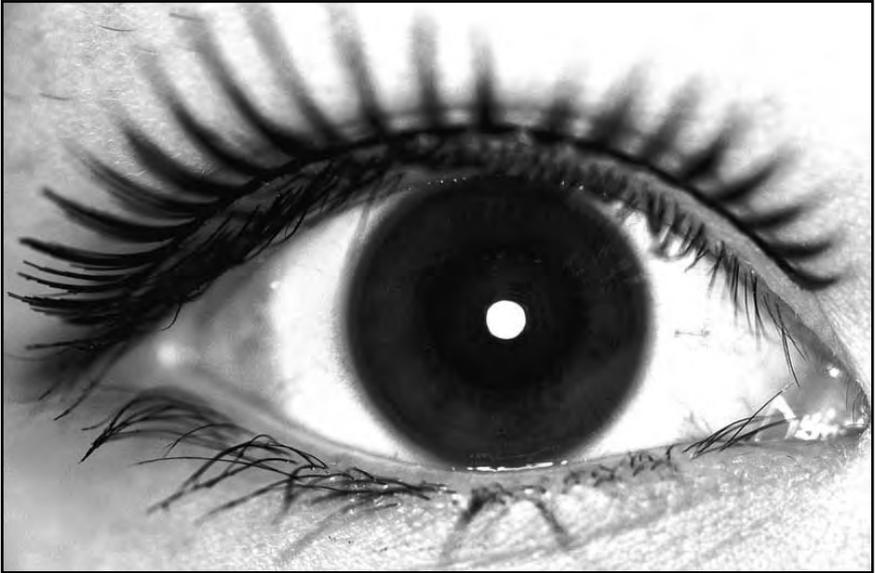
Conclusion

While individuals may not want to accept that there is a God, the evidence points to the contrary. The question is not "What do you and I prefer or desire?" but rather, "What we can know?" The seven evidences above prove there is an eternal God who played a major role in creating the earth and mankind. This evidence demands a voice in our society, and a response. I've heard it said many times that it takes more faith to be an atheist than a Christian. Given the amount of evidence we have for God, I would agree. God does exist. All of the best-sellers in the world espousing otherwise will not change that fact. But if we really expect our children to believe and follow the One True Living God, we must start thinking outside the box! Sadly, the atheists of this country are doing their job better.



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THE HUMAN EYE

Hugo McCord

It is refreshing, after one has become dispirited with the pessimism of blind evolution, to examine the positive, optimistic, thoughtful design seen in the human eye.

First, the physical elements making up the eye had to have a cause for their being in existence. Second, that those elements are arranged to form an optic nerve, a retina, lens, pupil, iris, and cornea means there was an arranger. Third, that all the caused and arranged parts cooperate to give sight appears to be the purpose of the designer. For nine months the parts being made and arranged in a dungeon are useless. Then, all of a sudden, the design is obvious, which design had to precede the making and the arranging of the multiple parts, and design reflects intelligence. An intelligence capable of producing sight cannot himself be blind: *“He who forms the eye, can he not see?”* (Psalm 94:9).

“In order to keep the eye moist and clean (which qualities are necessary to its brightness and its use), a wash is constantly supplied by a secretion for the purpose;

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and the superfluous brine is conveyed to the nose through a perforation in the bone as large as a goose-quill; or, more properly speaking, along two capillary tubes, one from either eyelid, which enter a duct, lodged in a canal passing through the bone. When once the fluid has entered the nose, it spreads itself upon the inside of the nostril, and is evaporated by the current of warm air which, in the course of respiration, is continually passing over it. Can any pipe or distillery be more mechanical than this is? It is easily perceived that the eye must want moisture; but can the want of the eye generate the gland which produces the tear, or bore the hole by which it is discharged — a hole through a bone?” (William Paley, apud Irwin H. Linton, *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, p. 119).

Charles Hodge wrote that the eye “was fashioned in the darkness of the womb, with a self-evident reference to the nature and properties of light, of which the creature for whose use it was fashioned had neither knowledge or experience” (*Systematic Theology* I, 218). A “blind and unconscious adaptation of means to an end is inconceivable,” wrote Hodge, but evolution is a blind and unconscious adaptation of means to an end.

John Stuart Mill was no friend of theism, but he was fair to make the following acknowledgements: “The particular combination of organic elements called the eye had, in every instance, a beginning in time, and must therefore have been brought together by a cause or causes.” Further, “inasmuch as the elements agree in the single circumstance of conspiring to produce sight, there must be some...causation between the cause which brought the elements together and the fact of sight...Not sight itself, but an antecedent idea of it must be the efficient cause. But this at once marks the origin as proceeding from an intelligent will” (apud G. Frederick Wright, *The Logic of Christian Evidences*, pp. 85-86).

Skeptical David Hume also was fair to write: “Anatomize the eye: survey its structure and contrivance; and 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*, p. 316).

An awareness of the intricacies and of the millions of parts of the human eye should be enough to convince the honest searcher that there had to be a Creator for such a wondrous tool in the human body. †

Hugo McCord, now deceased, was a preacher of the Gospel of Christ.

The New Testament Is the Only Standard of Right

E. Claude Gardner

What are the dimensions of the room where you are? How many feet wide and long is it? By taking a 12 inch ruler or a yardstick you can get an accurate measurement. Likewise, if ten others used the same measuring stick, they would report exactly the same figures as you found. If, in religion, everyone accepts one common standard of authority, then this should result in the same faith and practice. Confusion and frustration are experienced because different standards of authority are accepted. Good people are mystified by all the conflicting doctrines that are preached.

Our plea that is both scriptural and sensible is this: The New Testament is our only rule of faith and practice. We call all men back to the Word of God to guide us in all matters of our lives — spiritual, worship, personal, family, and business. We earnestly plead that we should “speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent; we should call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in the Bible way”.

Christ and His teaching must govern us. We acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior. We bow to Him as “*Lord*

of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14). He is the Head of the church who therefore controls our lives and authorizes how we are to worship. Paul wrote about the Headship of Jesus when he said, “*And hath put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church*” (Ephesians 1:22). The risen Christ made a bold and sweeping claim, “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*” (Matthew 28:18).

God, our Creator, has revealed Himself through Christ who has spoken to us through the New Testament. “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*” (Hebrews 1:1,2).

Jesus does not speak to us audibly, nor “through a still voice”, nor by the conscience, but through His Word revealed to the apostles as given in the New Testament. To the apostles (and not to us today) he promised, “*the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name,*

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he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). The Lord also assured them of guidance into all truth so that their message is inerrant (cf. John 15:26; 16:13). We conclude that the New Testament is an expression of our Savior's divine will and way, and therefore, it is our authority. It is the "*one faith*" (Ephesians 4:5). It is the only book to determine our faith, conduct, and worship; by it we should live and by it we should die; on it we should build our homes and our businesses or professions.

Jesus is the "*mediator of the new covenant*" (Hebrews 12:24). He is our Savior through the New Covenant or Testament. Sin has separated us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2) and Christ is our "go between" (mediator) through the New Covenant.

The Word of God furnishes us completely and hence, we need nothing more. Paul asserted, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

The New Testament is powerful enough to save us from sin. We must receive the implanted Word that is able "*to save your souls*" (James 1:21). It is described as "*quick*" (living) and "*powerful*". "*For the word of God is*

quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thought and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The New Testament is not a "dead letter". It is not essential for the Holy Spirit to "come into one's heart" in a direct and mysterious way in order to quicken the Word in the heart. The reason is clear — it is *living*. The only power God is using for our salvation is the New Testament, for Paul taught, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*" (Romans 1:16). It is this truth that sets us free. "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

Because Jehovah is mindful of His creation, he has supplied all of our needs. This is one of the precious promises of the New Testament, for Peter wrote, "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises*" (2 Peter 1:3,4). We cannot look to the Old Testament, books of philosophy, or the creeds of men to grant us spiritual life. Hence, we must contend earnestly for this faith. "*Beloved, when I gave all dili-*

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gence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

We repudiate all human creeds, confessions of faith, manuals, and church disciplines because the New Testament is our guide. Also, numerous instances can be cited to show how these creeds contradict the Word of God. They are also subject to frequent changes. A sensible motto rightly states: “If a human creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it contains less than the Bible, it contains too little; but if it contains the same thing as the Bible, we do not need it anyway”.

We earnestly plead that all men come back to the New Testament and to Christ as supreme authority in religion. May we all require a “*thus saith the Lord*” in all that we believe and practice. The voice from heaven said at the transfiguration, “*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*” (Matthew 17:5). †

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Tribute to the Bible

A.Z. Conrad

Century follows century – there it stands.

Empires rise and fall – there it stands.

Dynasty follows dynasty – there it stands.

Kings are crowned and uncrowned – there it stands.

Despised and torn to pieces – there it stands.

Atheists rail against it – there it stands.

Agnostics smile cynically – there it stands.

Profane punsters caricature it – there it stands.

Unbelief abandons it – there it stands.

Higher critics deny its inspiration – there it stands.

Thunderbolts of wrath smite it – there it stands.

The flames are kindled about it – there it stands.

The arrows of hate are discharged against it – there it stands.

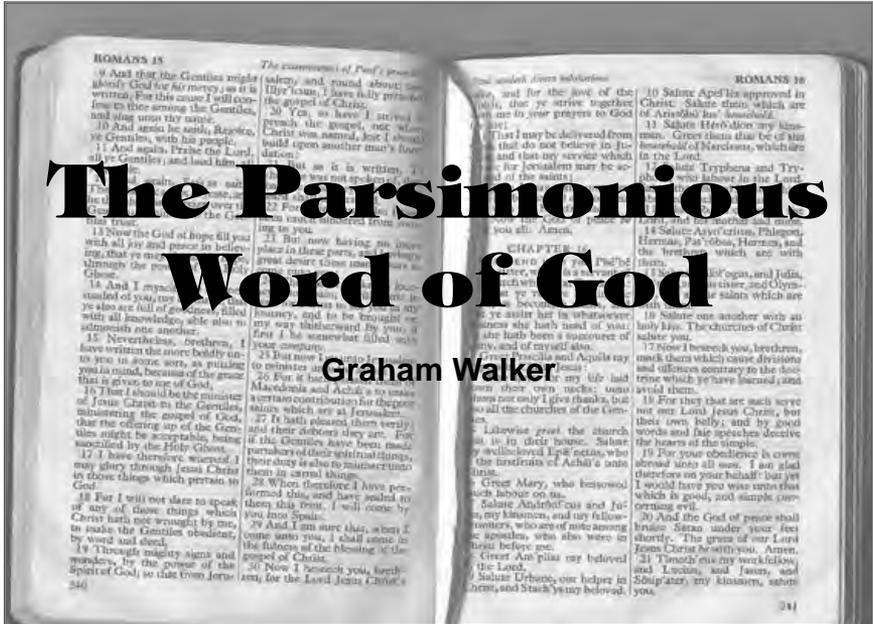
Radicalism rants and raves against it – there it stands.

Infidels predict its abandonment – there it stands.

The tooth of time gnaws but makes no dent in it – there it stands.

Modernism tries to explain it away – there it stands.

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The meaning of “parsimonious”: Exhibiting frugality; in the case of Scripture, the use of a minimum number of words to establish a Truth.

Isn't it just great how God has given man “*everything pertaining to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1), yet in such a way as to be brief? In other words, God's Book is comprehensively detailed in regard to that which matters, and is silent on things that have no bearing on what He wants His creation to do. This construction follows what is known as the “Law of Parsimony”. That is to say “that no more causes should be assumed that will account for the effect” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 1959).

There are many people who try to argue that because God did not specifically prohibit a certain thing, it cannot be wrong to practice it. For instance: God did not say anywhere in the New Testament that you shall not use musical instruments in worship to Him. Does this mean we can legitimately use such instruments and be pleasing to Him? Let us see what His Word reveals, in order to determine His will. “... *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17).

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In Genesis 6:4, Noah was instructed by the Lord to build an ark of “*gopher wood*”. What this wood resembled or looked like can only be left to man’s conjecture, as there is no listing of such today. But what can be established is that God was specific on the type of wood Noah was to use. He was not generic in His orders. In other words, He did not say to build the ark of just any wood. Notice, God did not say that Noah could not build it out of oak, pine, or cedar. In other words, He was silent in this regard. Now look at how pleased God was with His servant Noah. The Holy Spirit inspired the Hebrews writer to tell us that “*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household...*” (Hebrews 11:7). The *Strong’s* dictionary explains that “*godly fear*” is to have a state of apprehensiveness or reverence. Another way of putting it would be that Noah showed attentive respect for the words issued in regard to the construction material to be used in making the ark. It was “*by faith*” that Noah moved to do that which was pleasing to God and so be written up in Faith’s Hall of Fame. God did not have to enumerate a prohibited list of timbers for Noah because he understood that gopher wood was **the** timber to use.

Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 4:6: “*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written...***”

Here is a potent example of God’s parsimony at work in His instructions to man, and of the unfortunate results of not adhering to “*what [He has] written*”. Numbers 20:8 records the command for Moses to follow in order to supply water for the murmurers at Meribah. God *parsimoniously* said, “*speak ye unto the rock*”. He was silent in regard to other possible methods of extrusion. For instance, God did not say, “You (Moses) shall not kick the rock, split the rock, or strike the rock.” Yet, what did Moses do? The text says, “*Moses lifted up his hand, and smote the rock with his rod twice*” (Numbers 20:11). The consequences of this action are such that he is classed, along with his brother Aaron, as an unbeliever (verse 12). Although Moses makes it into Faith’s Hall of Fame for the many acts of faith he carried out (Hebrews 11:24), yet he is recorded by the same writer as being disobedient to the commands issued in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:16-19). Moses was simply not “*united in faith*” on that occasion. Why? Because he did not carry out exactly what the Lord required him to do, according to faith, without which it is “*impossible to please Him*” (Hebrews 4:2; 11:6).

The Hebrews writer has a definitive word to say in regard to the silence of the Scriptures. In Hebrews 7:11-14, we read, “*Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what*

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further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

*“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to **another tribe**, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of **which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.**”*

The writer makes the point that Moses wrote only of the tribe of Levi, from which the priests must descend. There can be found nowhere in the Law of Moses a statement to the effect that a priest *may not* come from Judah, or for that matter, from any of the other tribes. Did God have to declare the prohibition of each tribe unto the office of the priest? No! Why? Because the Jews understood the law authorized only Levites to that office.

Now, apply this principle to activities with which people take liberal license today, such as: playing musical instruments in worship to God, raising finance for the church through cake sales, car washes, etc. In each case, God did not say in the New Testament, “You cannot do it this way,” but He did say how He expects you to conform to His will. Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 2:12 all say “*sing*”. First Corinthians 16:2 says to “*lay by him in store*” on the first day of each week. To practice these activities any other way is to do as Moses did in Numbers 20:11, that is, to go “*beyond the things that are written*” (1 Corinthians 4:6).

We can know from the example given in Numbers 20:12 that punishment will be sure to follow if we do not adhere to that which is written. To go beyond the written Word is to exhibit unbelief. This is another way of saying we lack faith. It is my fervent hope that if you are not adhering to the Word, then please would you direct your eyes to 2 John 9 and note how one may fellowship the father and the Son: “*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. We must abide in the teaching of Christ, i.e., the “perfect...law of liberty”; “the gospel of Christ”; “the faith” (James 1:22; Galatians 1:7; 3:23-25).*

Remember, just because the Lord remains silent on a subject does not mean He authorizes its practice; in fact, the very opposite is true. It would do man well to have the old restoration plea uppermost in his mind in regard to silence of the Scriptures; that is, “Speak where the Bible speaks; remain silent where the Bible is silent.” †

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Romans 10:14-21

Jerry Bates

1. Is calling on God the same as belief? How do we know? (v. 14)
2. Can a person simply obey what knowledge he has of God and be saved? How do we know? (v. 14)
3. What Old Testament prophet does Paul quote in 10:15?
4. Why are the feet of those who preach considered by God to be beautiful? (v. 15)
5. Is obedience part of saving faith? (v. 16)
6. Where does faith come from? (v. 17)
7. Had Israel ever heard God's Word? (v. 18) What Scripture does Paul quote to prove this point?
8. Why was Israel basically ignorant of God's will? (v. 19)
9. What was going to be one purpose of God saving the Gentiles? (v. 19)
10. What Old Testament Scriptures are quoted in 10:20,21?
11. God was found by the Gentiles who were not seeking God. What does this tell us about the nature of evangelism? (v. 20)
12. What does the imagery of stretched out hands represent? (v. 21)
13. What does this tell us about God's desire to save Israel? (v. 21)
14. Why was Israel not saved? (v. 21)
15. What do these verses tell us about the basic reason why Israel rejected Christ and His Gospel?

(see the back cover for answer)

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” 19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” 20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” 21 But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

NOTES: In the first part of chapter 10, Paul emphasizes that even though Israel had great zeal for God, they were not saved. The basic reason was lack of knowledge. More than just zeal is required. Knowledge of God’s will is also required. In this section, Paul discusses the question of why Israel was ignorant of God’s will, and therefore, were not being saved.

God has always been anxious to save mankind. In spite of repeated rejection by Israel, God was still open to them and was willing to save them, if they would finally turn to Him. God had revealed His will to Israel, and He has also revealed it to us. God expects all of us to respond in obedience to the hearing of His will. God is a jealous God, and He was hoping to move Israel to jealousy due to the salvation of the Gentiles. Israel had made God jealous with that which is no god, and God would provoke Israel to jealousy with those who were not “a people” (Gentiles).

Since God is very anxious to save everyone, even those who continually reject Him, then we as His servants should have a similar passion for saving the lost. The very nature of evangelism is not waiting for the lost to come to us, but going out and finding those who may not be actively looking for God.

The Crucified Thief

Owen D. Olbricht

Being a thief is not unusual. Thieves have been active throughout the history of the world. Jesus was crucified between two unnamed thieves (Matthew 27:38,44; Mark 15:27) whom Luke called criminals (Luke 23:33). Judas is the only named thief in the Bible (John 12:4-6).

What Can Be Known

We can only know for sure about the past lives of the two criminals who were crucified: that they were caught, convicted of their crimes, and sentenced to be crucified. We cannot know for sure that they were not in the crowds that heard Jesus speak and saw His miracles or heard about Him from others. Nor can we know that they were not among the many people John baptized (Matthew 3:5,6; Mark 1:5; John 3:23) or Jesus' disciples baptized (John 3:22; 4:1,2).

We can know that both criminals joined with others who reviled Jesus (Matthew 27:44). One of them later said, *"If You are the Christ, [other manuscripts say, "Are You not the Christ?"] save Yourself and us"* (Luke 23:39). The other one said, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'"* (Luke 23:42).

That very day the thief did not go to heaven but was with Jesus in Hades where Jesus' soul went and where He remained until His resurrection (Acts 2:27,31). Jesus did not ascend to the Father at that time (John 20:17), but later (John 20:17; Acts 1:2,3,9).

Unique Salvation

The thief, who requested Jesus to remember him, neither obeyed the requirements for forgiveness under the Law, which ended at the cross (Ephesians 2:14,15; Colossians 2:14) nor those under the new covenant that Jesus ratified by His death on the cross (Hebrews 9:16,17; 10:9).

The thief can be classified with the paralytic Jesus forgave (Matthew 9:2,4) and a sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with

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her hair, and kissed His feet and anointed them with oil (Luke 7:37,38,48,50). Jesus forgave them to show that while on earth He had the power to forgive sins (Matthew 9:4) according to His own discretion without the requirements of the Law (Leviticus 4:27-31) or of the new covenant (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), which, as yet, had not been dedicated by His blood (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:15-17).

Jesus' promise to the thief that he would be with Him in Paradise is a unique case, for he died before forgiveness began to be preached in Jesus' name, thus before it was offered to all nations. It began to be preached by Peter and the other apostles in Jerusalem as Jesus had promised (Luke 24:46,47; Acts 2:5,38). For the first time in the history of the world, people were offered forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. Peter told the people, "*Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

Nowhere in the New Testament is it recorded that the early church preached that people were to be saved like the crucified thief. Forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name began to be preached (Luke 24:46,47)

- After Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised.
- On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1,6,38) more than 40 days (Acts 1:2) after the thief had died.
- From Jerusalem by Peter and not outside Jerusalem by Jesus from the cross.
- To all nations without mention of the thief on the cross.
- First to Jews (Romans 1:16) who were told to "*be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

Examples For Us

In no case does the Bible state that anyone is to be saved like the crucified thief. The composite of the examples in the Book of Acts and other New Testament books shows that people who heard forgiveness preached in Jesus' name believed in Him, repented, confessed faith in Him, and were baptized in order to be forgiven and to have their sins washed away (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12, 35-39; 22:16).

The crucified thief is a *unique* case, but he is *not an example* of how we are to obey Jesus in order to be saved (Hebrews 5:9). †

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Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Bill Dillon

The declaration of Paul in Romans 1:16 stands as one of his boldest and most significant utterances: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

When Paul said he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he meant that he was not ashamed of the principles and doctrines that Christ taught. At the time Paul made this statement, the followers of Christ were held in contempt and were looked upon in derision by the enemies of the Gospel. Paul was nevertheless willing to accept the Lord’s teachings and proclaim them far and wide, that others also might hear and come to the knowledge of the truth.

In the first century, cruel suffering, and perhaps death at the hands of the heathen, came to the followers of Christ. However, such things did not cause Paul to swerve from his staying the course of duty and faithfulness.

Paul was not ashamed to preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2), the one church (1 Corinthians 12:20; Colossians 1:18), and the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3,4).

Paul knew what a wondrous change the Gospel had wrought in his own life. The things he once loved, he now hated; and the things he once hated, he now loved. Before, he had zealously persecuted Christians and marshaled his abilities against the teachings of Christ; now, he was willing and eager to proclaim the very same teachings to the world at any cost (Galatians 1:13,23).

Paul also had seen how the Gospel had a saving and transforming influence upon the lives of others. He had observed it shape the lives of sinners and fashion them into saints (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Certainly, such a Gospel was nothing to be ashamed of, but rather, a thing in which to glory.

**“Ashamed of Jesus! Just as soon let midnight be ashamed of noon.
‘Tis midnight with my soul, til He, Bright morning Star, bid darkness flee.”**

Paul’s love for Christ and his conviction that the Gospel was to include all mankind made him travel the world to reach the legions of the lost.

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This Gospel of Jesus Christ upholds the highest of ideals and ethical standards. It is the one true religion. All other pathways to salvation and peace lead only to disappointment and despair.

May we always have such a love for the blessed Gospel that we may never be ashamed to be examples of sinners saved by the Gospel of God's grace, and, like Paul, let us be willing to glorify the Author of that Gospel in our lives. †

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Salvation Involves...

5. *Baptism ~ Acts 2:38*
4. *Confessing Christ ~ Romans 10:9,10*
3. *Repentance ~ Luke 13:3,5*
2. *Belief ~ Mark 16:16*
1. *Hearing ~ Romans 10:17*

Following these five steps will not give us a punched ticket to heaven. We must follow *all* of God's instructions as outlined in the Bible even if one is:

- Disowned by parents and siblings
- Fired from one's job
- Forced to move out of one's home
- Ridiculed by friends
- Imprisoned
- Even killed

"...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"
(Revelation 2:10).

Bonnie Rushmore

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Trust in God

Robert D. Rawson

God's instruction regarding faith can hardly be overly emphasized (Hebrews 11:1ff). Faith is not a step into the darkness. Rather, it is built upon substance of hope and evidence of the unseen. Wonderful is the design of God in creation: "*For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God*" (Hebrews 3:4). Yes, every house is built by mankind, but God is the builder of the man as well as the materials used in the building of a house. Does not design call upon us to be more trusting in God?

The guidance of God by His Word (John 17:17) is into a set-apart (sanctified) life. The lifestyle is different than the world. Old friends will think 'strange' of us when they see us living the sanctified way (1 Peter 4:4). It's the 'strait gate and narrow way' (Matthew 7:13,14) that Jesus taught which will help us into life eternal.

The way of the Lord is different in outcome than the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Does telling the truth, being merciful, helping others in need, and extending the Gospel which saves (Romans 1:16) seem to bring the outcomes that cause us to be even more trusting in God and His way of life?

Why not trust in God for our pardon from sin? The initial pardon of an obedient faith (John 8:24,31,32) is brought about by continuing in His Word. As we see more and more responsibilities, we repent, confess Christ, and are baptized into Him (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10; Galatians 3:26,27).

While living within this fellowship of the Father and the Son (1 John 1:2-4), we *confess* rather than deny sin (v. 9), and God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us. Are we as trusting in this part of God's pardon? We certainly should be. Thank God for His continued fellowship with us. Let's do our part (v. 9) and enjoy the benefits of trust. †

Robert D. Rawson is the Gospel preacher for the Crockett, Mississippi, USA church of Christ.

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One Year to Live

Ernest S. Underwood

The doctor comes into your room and in somber tones tells you that you have only one more year to live. What changes, if any, would you make? Let's notice some possibilities.

Would you adopt a new sense of values? Would "things" be so important? Would you use your time more wisely? Would you learn to put spiritual things first?

Would you attempt to clear up your past as much as possible, apologizing for words and deeds that you would liked to have recalled? Would you clear up your past with God by learning and obeying the Gospel? Although we cannot undo some things, we can be forgiven of them if we follow God's commands concerning sins and how to be forgiven of them.

Would you do your best to develop a spiritual life by work and worship in the Lord's church? Would you pray more, study more, and teach your friends, relatives and neighbors?

Remember, my friend, if you are not preparing, according to God's instructions, **to live** a life in harmony with His will, then, friend, you are not prepared **to die**. †

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I'm Tired of "Church Growth"

John Gipson

Please forgive me if I should sound like a heretic, but I'm tired of hearing about "Church Growth", a phrase which can mean something — or nothing. Perhaps I have read too many articles and books, or heard too many lectures on the theme. Whatever the reason, I've grown weary hearing about it.

It's not that I long for a stagnant church. Quite the contrary. The church of the first century grew rapidly, and I would love to see it happen again in the 21st century.

I'm confident that I have been helped by a study of "Church Growth" over the years, but my problem lies with strategies designed primarily to recruit new members, with little emphasis on evangelism. In short, I think we are missing the boat when we emasculate our message in order to appeal to the masses, as if we were salesmen bent on pleasing customers rather than proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

The power of salvation lies not in publicity, entertainment, gimmicks, or emotional outbursts. It is to be found in the Word of God, the Gospel. *"The seed is the word of God...My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it...Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it...They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with bold-*

ness...It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God...And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied greatly...Samaritania had received the word of God...The Gentiles had also received the word of God...But the word of God grew and multiplied...When they arrived in Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God...He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God...The whole city gathered together to hear the word of God...They were glad and glorified the word of God...And they stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them...You received the word of God which you heard from us...The word of God is not fettered...For the word of God is living and active..."

It's still the Gospel that is the power of God to salvation. It's the only thing that will bring life. *"You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God"* (1 Peter 1:23).

So, preach the Word!

That's *God's* method of church growth! †

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Overstating the Case:

Acts 24:5

Jimmy Clark

“For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). These words of Tertullus show how accusations can be false and

overstated. It is true that Paul’s work of preaching the Gospel created no small stir everywhere (cf. Acts 17:6). It is also true that Paul’s preaching ‘Christ crucified’ was to certain Jews a stumbling block (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23), while to other Jews who believed, it was the message of power and wisdom, and that from God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:24). It is also true that Paul was a leader, though not of any sect (cf. Acts 28:22,23). Whenever there is an attempt to prejudice the minds of people, overstating and misrepresentations come into action. Consider three statements that need careful thought.

1. **“The Church of Christ thinks they are the only ones going to heaven.”**

This statement is generally made by people outside churches of Christ. One underlying assumption in the statement is the belief that there must be saved people in various religious bodies of Christendom. An honest investigation of the Bible shows that religious division is sinful (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Where division is present, those who are approved stand out from the division (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:18,19). Paul wrote by inspiration concerning the churches of Christ (cf. Romans 16:16). Since Paul was not sectarian, it is possible to use that expression to promote unity. Paul wrote that Jesus saves the body of Christ (cf. Ephesians 5:23). The saved and the church are revealed as one and the same people (cf. Acts 2:47). While there may be some in churches of Christ who have the wrong attitude toward others, believing that one has been added by the Lord to the one body (cf. Ephesians 4:4; Acts 2:47) through obedience to the Gospel (cf. Acts 2:38-41) is not bigotry or elitism. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to

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those who obey Him (cf. Hebrews 5:9). All who obey the mere doctrines of men worship Him in vain (cf. Matthew 15:9). Even those who are hypocrites within the church will not be in heaven (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-2). Only those who do the will of the Father will be saved (cf. Matthew 7:21- 23).

2. “The church is losing its young people.” This kind of statement plays on the fears of people, especially parents. Sometimes inept parents want to shift the responsibility to the church. The Bible clearly states that the work of bringing up children falls in the realm of the home (cf. Ephesians 6:4). While the local congregation can teach and encourage (cf. 1 Timothy 5:1,2), it is the role of parents to see to the development and leadership of their own children. Children are not born into the church, but into the home. The home and local congregation need to work together to fortify the next generation, not work against one another.

3. “The church will cease to exist if it does not change with the times.” The alarmists of the day have attempted to motivate people to follow certain philosophies away from the truth so that the church might be acceptable to the world. Truth is never going to be popular with the world on the whole (cf. Matthew 7:13-15; John 3:19-21). The stony and thorny ground members will always be around (cf. Luke 8:13,14). Man’s life is to conform to the Gospel, not change the Gospel to fit what is in vogue with the world (cf. Philippians 1:27; Romans 12:2). †

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The Church of the Lord Is Essential

- The fulfillment of prophecy: Isaiah 2:2,3
- The object of Christ’s promise: Matthew 16:18
- The institution of all the saved: Acts 2:47
- Purchased by the blood of Christ: Acts 20:28
- The family of God: Ephesians 3:15
- The kingdom of God: Matthew 16:18,19
- The custodian of God’s wisdom: Ephesians 3:10
- The pillar and ground of the truth and the house of God: 1 Timothy 3:15
- The group whom Christ will save: Ephesians 5:23
- The Bride of Christ: Romans 7:4
- That for which Christ gave Himself: Ephesians 5:25

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Preach Christ, But Not the Church



J.C. Choate

People often say, “I’m not interested in ‘the church’ — in organized religion. Just preach Christ, and don’t bother me about the church.”

Throughout the Old Testament, a great deal was said about the coming of a spiritual *kingdom*. Isaiah foretold that in the last days *the Lord’s kingdom would be established* (Isaiah 2:2,3). Daniel said that God would set up *a kingdom* which would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). Joel said that the Lord’s Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh at that time (Joel 2:28,29), and Peter explained that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled in the momentous happenings recorded in Acts 2.

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John the Baptist came preaching that *the kingdom of heaven* was near at hand (Matthew 3:1,2), and Christ said that some who were standing in His presence would not taste of death until they saw *the kingdom* come with power (Mark 9:1).

Finally, Christ said that He would build *His church* upon the rock — the fact that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:18,19; 1 Corinthians 3:11). He promised that He would give to the apostles the keys of *the kingdom*, the authority to tell men and women what they could do to enter *the kingdom or the church*.

In Acts 2, we see that the prophecies were fulfilled concerning the establishment of *the kingdom* in Jerusalem, as the power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles and they began to speak with tongues, or in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was *the kingdom* that John had said was soon to be established, the one that was from heaven, and the one Christ had said He would build. The apostles, then, used the keys of *the kingdom or the church* as they preached the Gospel for the first time and revealed to sinful men how they could be saved. Those who heard, believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of their sins were saved and added to *the church* by the Lord himself (Acts 2:47).

The kingdom and the church were therefore the same institution, being *the house of God or the spiritual body of Christ* (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Paul, speaking to the church at Colosse, said concerning God, “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Colossians 1:13). The Hebrew writer said, “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (Hebrews 12:28). Now of what kingdom was he speaking? *The kingdom of God, the kingdom* which was from heaven, *the Lord’s church*, comprised of people the Lord saved and added to it, making them members of *His body, the spiritual body of Christ*, again being *the church* (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18).

Now after the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, the record says concerning Christ, “*To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3). In other words, Christ was giving final instructions to the apostles concerning *His kingdom or church*, which would shortly be established in Jerusalem. He went on to exhort, “*But ye shall receive the power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

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So in Acts 2, *that kingdom, the Lord's church*, itself was established, with some 3,000 obeying God and being added to it (Acts 2:40-47). The Gospel was preached again and again both in Jerusalem and in Judea, with thousands more obeying the Lord and being added to *that same church*.

But there is more. At this point, the record says, “*Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached Christ** to them*” (Acts 8:5). Continuing, we read, “*But when they believed Philip preaching things concerning **the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ**, they were baptized both men and women*” (Acts 8:12).

So what do we have? We see how the Lord instructed the apostles concerning *the kingdom of God*, and then Philip preached *Christ* to the Samaritans. But, amazingly, in doing so he also preached *the kingdom of God* to them! Why was there so much emphasis on the kingdom or the church? Because it was the culmination of God's efforts for mankind; it was the vehicle through which He would provide salvation. It was from God, it had been prophesied, the Lord had promised it, and the saved were added to it! *Its importance cannot be overstated.*

Yes, we often hear people saying the church is not important and that we should not talk about it so much. It is true that the church is not *the Savior*, since it is made up of *the saved*, who are human beings; but *Christ is the Savior of the church*, having died for it and having purchased it with His own blood, and therefore, we must be members of it if we want to be saved and to go to heaven.

If you remove from the New Testament Scriptures all of the things said *about the kingdom or the church*, how much would be left?

Furthermore, if Christ built *the church*, is Head of it and Savior of it, serving as its foundation and calling it by His name, if He has promised to return for it and present it to God, how could anyone think that it is unimportant? And how will men know about it, of its divine origin, of its purpose and mission, and of its tremendous place of importance in God's overall plan *unless we preach it to the world?*

In conclusion, let us appreciate the church, love it as the Lord loves it, be thankful to be members of it, and let us eagerly tell others about it so that it may truly spread throughout the entire world. As Paul said, “*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Ephesians 3:21). †

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Baptized into Christ

Jodie Boren

The Bible clearly teaches that salvation is IN Christ (2 Timothy 2:10 and Ephesians 1:3). The other side of this is that those outside of Christ have no hope and are without God (Ephesians 2:12). Since salvation is IN Christ, the question arises, how does one get INTO Christ?

The first step is to **believe** — or have faith — that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (Acts 8:37). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), and without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). Believing doesn't put one into Christ, but it gives one the power to become a child of God (John 1:12).

The second step is **repentance**. Jesus said, "*Except ye repent ye shall perish*" (Luke 13:3). Godly sorrow causes us to turn from the world and to turn to Christ (2 Corinthians 7:10). But, still, one isn't IN Christ at this point.

The third step is to **confess Christ** (Romans 10:10 and Matthew 10:32,33). Notice: This is an oral confession before men that is unto (in order to receive) salvation. But still, one is not IN Christ at this time.

The fourth and culminating step that puts one INTO Christ is **baptism**. In Galatians 3:27 we see that one is baptized INTO the one body. Remember, there is only ONE BODY, and Christ is Head over all things to the church, which is His one body (Ephesians 1:22,23). So, if you're IN Christ, you are in His body, which is the church. Salvation is, therefore, IN His body, which is the church. *Now*, one is IN Christ!

In order to be baptized INTO Christ, one has to be outside of Christ and in a lost (unsaved) condition. It is impossible to be baptized INTO Christ if you are already in Christ. Some say that one is saved and then is baptized as an outward expression to show that he has been saved. The Bible teaches just the opposite. Salvation comes when one who is *outside* of Christ and *unsaved* is baptized INTO Christ.

Notice in Romans 6:4 that "*we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*". It is AFTER baptism that one becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4) — not BEFORE baptism!

Baptism is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In baptism we crucify the old man of sin (Romans 6:4-7) and are made free from sin, for it is in

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the act of baptism that, figuratively speaking, we come in contact with the precious blood of Christ that washes away our sins (Acts 22:16 and 1 Peter 1:18,19).

The Bible teaches very plainly that we are saved by GRACE. No question about it — we're saved by grace. But this “*grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men...*” (Titus 2:11). However, not all men are saved, because Jesus teaches that the great majority of people will be lost (Matthew 7:13,14). We must conclude, therefore, that the grace of God is OFFERED to all, but it is ACCEPTED only by our belief and obedience. Jesus is “*the author of eternal salvation to all those that OBEY Him*” (Hebrews 5:8,9).

Let me illustrate it this way. Think of a great ship on the ocean, which represents Jesus' one body, with Jesus at the helm, for He is the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). Now, the sea represents sin, and we are drowning in sin. Jesus throws us a life preserver (His grace) as He wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Being free moral agents (that is, we can choose to serve either God or Satan), we can accept or reject the life preserver. To reject God's grace is to refuse to obey Him. To accept His gift of salvation we do so by taking the four steps mentioned above.

Baptism is not a *work*, but is an act of *obedience* (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 2:38; 10:48). Belief is described by Jesus in John 6:29 as “*the work of God.*” Have you been baptized INTO Christ? †

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The *Excepts* of Jesus

Jim Martin

“*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:3).

“*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3).

“*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3).

“*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5).

“*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*” (John 6:53).

“*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20).

“*Except ye abide in me...is cast forth as a branch, and is withered*” (John 15:4,6).

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“I am of Christ”

Royce Frederick

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul,’ or I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

Paul tells us it is wrong to divide the church into groups which follow men. However, in his rebuke of the Corinthians, he mentions Christ in the very same way as Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (v. 12).

Is it wrong to say, “I am of Christ”?

We find the answer by inserting each person’s name into “test questions” in verse 13.

Question 1: Was Paul crucified for you? No. Was Apollos crucified for you? No. Was Cephas crucified for you? No. Was Christ crucified for you? Yes!

Question 2: Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No. Were you baptized in the name of Apollos? No. Were you baptized in the name of Cephas? No. Were you baptized in the name of Christ? The Christians at Corinth would be able to answer, “Yes”! The apostle Peter said, “...*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” (Acts 2:38).

If we insert John, Joseph, Mary, Andrew, Luther, or any other such name, the answer is always “No.”

“Is Christ divided?” No. But the teachings of men can take people away from Christ (Galatians 1:6-10; 5:4; Matthew 15:9, 13; 2 John 9-10; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

“Christ” is the answer! We should honor His name in everything (Colossians 1:18). All sinners who truly obey “the gospel of Christ” enter His

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church, “the body of Christ”, and become members of “the churches of Christ” (Romans 1:16; 6:3-5, 17,18; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13,27; Colossians 1:18; Galatians 3:26,27). He gave His followers only one name, “Christian”, which honors Him who died for us (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).

Paul did not tell us it is wrong to say, “I am of Christ”. Instead, he tells us we should give Christ “the preeminence” and do all things in His name (Colossians 1:18; 3:17). †

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Silence Is More Powerful Than Noise

Prayer is likely to be undervalued by all but wise people because it is so silent and so secret. We are often deceived into thinking that noise is more important than silence. War sounds far more important than the noiseless growing of a crop of wheat, yet the silent wheat feeds millions, while war destroys them. Nobody but God knows how often prayers have changed the course of history. Many a man who prayed received no credit except in heaven. We are tempted to turn from prayer to something more noisy like speeches or guns, because our motives are mixed. We are interested in the making of a better world, of course, but we also want people to give us credit for what we have done.

Secret prayer for others all during the day is an acid test of our unselfishness. Our little selves must fade out, leaving a self-forgetting channel through which God’s warmth flows unhindered in lovely unending prayer. The highest form of communion is not asking God for things for ourselves, but letting Him flow down through us, out over the world — in endless benediction. In the old Hebrew story, Sodom needed ten good men to be saved. Now the world needs ten million. Are you one of that ten million, by which our age may be saved?

— Anonymous

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses Ezekiel 28:12-16

Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering ... The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

"You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.

"By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.

The passage seems to be describing the angelic being who became "Satan", the arch enemy of God, through his lust for power and desire for authority even over God Himself. Some religions teach that God is the sole cause of good and evil in the world. It is important that we understand that Satan is the source of evil, not God.

As is often the case in prophetic passages, there is debate about these verses in Ezekiel. Previous words were addressed to the "king of Tyre", so effort is made to apply these statements to him also, but an analysis of the various descriptive points must cause us to conclude that no human is the subject of these statements.

ANALYSIS:

★ **"seal of perfection", "full of wisdom" "perfect in beauty"**

— this does not sound like a human king.

★ **"was in Eden"** — the King of Tyre was not in Eden.

★ **"a created being"** — Since Adam, humans are "born", not "created".

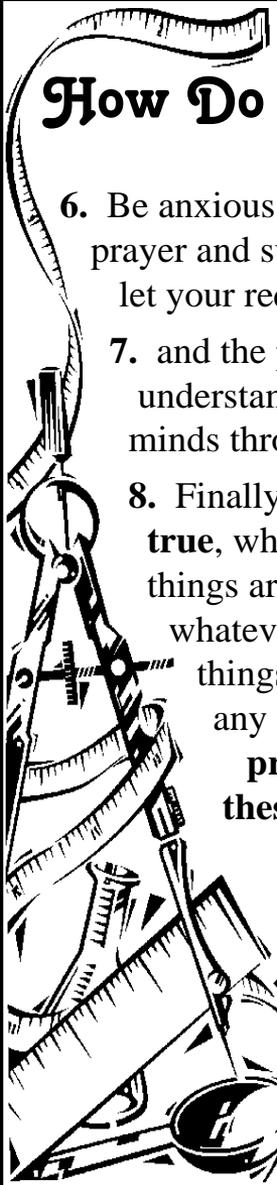
★ **"the anointed cherub"** — an angel, in authority.

★ **"on the holy mountain of God"** — not an earthly scene.

★ **"perfect in all his ways"** — no human is perfect.

★ **"became corrupted and violent"** — Isaiah 14:12-15 describes the fall of "Lucifer", a parallel passage in many ways.

★ **"was cast out of the holy mountain"** — Compare with Revelation 12:7-12.



How Do You Measure Up?

6. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
7. and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
8. Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are of **good report**, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy** — **meditate on these things. ...and the God of peace will be with you.**

Philippians 4:6-8

“Come and Go to Worship with Me!”

Keith Parker

It’s amazing. So simple – and yet so amazing. “Come and go to worship with me.” Sometimes that’s all it takes. Let me give you a few suggestions on inviting your family and neighbors to worship with you.

1. **Be Soul-Conscious.** “*Lift up your eyes*” (John 4:35). Realize that every person you meet is headed to heaven or to hell: the waitress, grocery clerk, banker, postman, doctor, lawyer, salesman, nurse, neighbor, and friend.
2. **Be enthusiastic.** “*Fervent in spirit*” (Romans 12:11). Be warm, cheerful, pleasant. Brag on Jesus. Brag on your church. Tell somebody with a smile on your face and a sparkle in your eye how glad you are to be associated with this church.
3. **Be Natural.** Don’t force your invitation...religion. Relax. Go with the flow. To a newcomer to your community, you might say, “Hey, if you haven’t found a church home, we’d love to have you...Come and check us out.”
4. **Be Specific.** Don’t just say, “Come to worship with me sometime.” Give details. “What about visiting with us this coming Sunday; we start at 9:00 for Bible Study, 10:00 for worship, 6:00 Sunday nights, and 7:00 on Wednesdays.”
5. **Be Hospitable.** “*Given to hospitality*” (Romans 12:13). A dinner invitation will get a lot of folks to worship. A preacher once said, “Anyone who comes to Christ because of chicken dinners and ice cream socials is about as dead as the chicken and as cold as the ice cream.” Maybe so, but fried chicken and ice cream have opened hearts...and stomachs.
6. **Be Persistent.** Keep on keeping on. Good salesmen tell us it takes about 10 attempts/contacts to make a sale. Never give up. Invite, invite, invite. Pray, pray, pray.

Sometime ago, I visited someone who attended our services and who lives near the church building. He had come because of an invitation from one of our members. He said, “You know, I was just waiting for someone to invite me. I didn’t want to barge in.” **Know anybody like that?** †

Keith Parker works with the Hendersonville Church of Christ in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.

Sow in Tears, Reap in Joy

Charles Box

Let's go fishing for men. Those compassionate souls who go forth with God's Word reap a harvest of souls. *"Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psalm 126:5,6).

It is a spiritual blessing to visit, teach, and encourage. Someone wrote the following under the title "Visitation". "Well, I went to visitation... against my will, I guess. I was hot and tired and troubled, and I wasn't my best. But they told me I was needed, so I knew I couldn't rest, with my conscience making comments about how I'd failed the test. First, I went to see a shut-in...(she'd been one quite some time). Oh, how she missed the brethren, but she tried hard not to pine! Next, a brother who'd been absent several Sundays in a row...he thought nobody missed him, but he said next time, he'd go. Last, I called upon a couple...who'd just moved into town. I invited them to visit, and they said

they'd come around. Back home again I pondered...why, I was feeling fine, recalling these gladdened faces. The pleasure was all MINE!!!"

You and I are to blame if souls are lost without ever hearing the Gospel. How sad if anyone should say, *"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk they have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul"* (Psalm 142:3,4). Make it a point to care enough to talk to someone about Christ today!

Those who follow Jesus will be fishers of men. *"Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'"* (Matthew 4:19). Those who are not fishing for men are not following Jesus. The Great Commission says go. *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does*

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15,16). Christians cannot sit down and expect the world to come to them. Go tell someone about salvation this week.

D.T. Wiles had it correct when he said, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where food is to be found.” The Messiah is ours only if we share Him with others. Nothing can be worse than failing to approach lost souls with the Gospel. Do we care enough to sow in tears?

Those who appreciate what Christ has done for them feel as Paul: *“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”* (Romans 1:14,15). Those who appreciate their own salvation feel a debt to share the good news with others. The Gospel is God’s power to save. *“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 1:16). But the Gospel is powerless to save until it is brought into contact with one needing salvation.

There is much to do. Many of the things which help in building up the kingdom can easily be done by any of us. Some unknown author wrote the following lines under the title, *“Do You Feel Left Out?”*

- WHEN it is announced that

someone is sick, do you...send a card? Offer help? Organize help, if necessary? Get irritated with announcements about people you don’t even know?

- WHEN new souls are added to the Lord, do you...introduce yourself and welcome them? Visit and encourage them? Invite them into your home? Ignore them until they introduce themselves to you?
- WHEN you think there isn’t enough social activity, do you... invite groups of Christians into your home? Plan and carry out recreational activities for either adults or children? Offer to supply transportation or help for activities which others plan? Complain that no one is doing anything?
- WHEN no one seems friendly, do you...become a friend to anybody in need? Make it your place to greet visitors? Invite people to your home for dinner? Look for another church?
- WHEN Bible classes are provided, do you...attend faithfully and encourage others to do so? Prepare your lessons? Contribute to the class discussion with comments or by asking questions? Sit with your mouth shut waiting for the class to be more interesting than it was last time?
- WHEN work is planned, do you... arrange your plans so you can be there if it is at all possible?

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- Look for ways you can contribute to the upkeep and improvement of the building (not only on work days)? Always manage to be “too busy” because it is your only day off?

Let us feel the “urgency” of evangelism. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). The urgency of evangelism demands that we preach and teach as “dying men to dying men.” People are dying and GOING TO HELL, and the church seems to have no sense of urgency about evangelism.

Have you ever thought about how much good could be done in the church if each person would devote one hour

per month, face to face with some lost soul, teaching the powerful Gospel of Christ? Let us resolve to go to work ourselves in the area of evangelism. Millions of people will die this year! How many of them will die lost?

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’ (Matthew 9:36-38). †

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“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6).

“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything” (1 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

Doing What We Can

Paul E. Marty

All too often, we make the mistake of becoming intimidated right out of doing the Lord's work! Why do we make such a mistake? What leads us to thinking we cannot do what God has asked us to do? Firstly, many have fallen into the habit of thinking that 'the Lord's work' is difficult and requires many talents (kind of like the one-talent man was thinking). Then, we end up hiding our talent and not using it, so we lose it. Truth be known, a person with only one talent *can* do the Lord's work.

Secondly, we live in a culture that mistakenly believes that only elders, deacons, preachers, and Bible class teachers are appointed to teach the Gospel, and the rest of us are to be spectators. God makes the point over and over again in Scripture that each one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Let's realize that we are *all* God's servants, and we each need to do our part in the kingdom of God. That is why in 1 Corinthians 12 the church is likened to a body. That great chapter makes the point that the foot is no less a part of the body than the hand or the head. The seemingly less important body parts have purposes, and also the seemingly less important church members have their places in the church of God.

Thirdly, there are those who believe that we cannot learn to do the Lord's work effectively and well, and that since we cannot learn it, we should avoid it. Jesus trained His apostles; they in turn trained others who could train others, and so on (2 Timothy 2:2). We, nowhere in Scripture, read of an apostle or of God making any demands upon any human being that were over and above the human being's capabilities.

In conclusion, in the final Day of Judgment, if you remember the Parable of the Talents, it is neither about how much you did, nor is it about how much potential you had, or how much you could have done, but **did you do what you could and as much as you could to the best of your ability?** Let us do what we can *now* so that *we and those we teach* can have Heaven forever. †

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Where Is Your Place at the Wall?

Chad Ezelle

In the opening chapters of Nehemiah, we see a man who was consumed with God's plan for his life. His zeal for God's work was evident in the way he handled himself before the king, the way he responded when told about the state of Jerusalem, and the planning he did while waiting for the right opportunity. Further, it was because of that zeal that Nehemiah accomplished such great things in God's kingdom.

His zeal led him to the walls and gates of a tattered city. When Nehemiah reached his beloved town, he found a place in ruins and people who did not care one way or another. Their city — God's city — was in terrible shape, and no one was doing anything about it. Nehemiah inspected, was honest in his assessment of the city, and got to work on God's kingdom.

If we are honest with ourselves about God's kingdom today, it's not in much better shape than Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day. The walls of the church (not the buildings) are broken and the gates are burned — and maybe that is the big reason that we do not see many people these days entering the gates of the kingdom.

It is about time we fixed the city — the church. It is time that we inspect the walls and figure out where we can do some renovation and rebuilding on God's city, the church, Jesus' body. The walls are broken and the gates are burning — have you found your place to renovate and rebuild yet? †

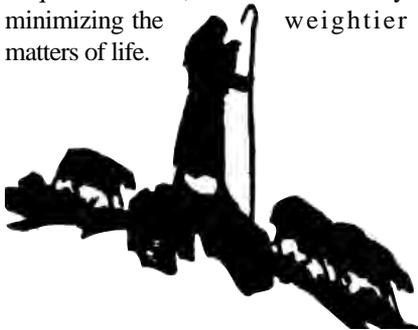
Chad Ezelle preaches for the Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

What Do We See?

Jerry Rogers

Matthew 9:36 “*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*” The New Testament record shows that Jesus saw something in each encounter. Whether one was rich, poor, a prostitute, or a child, it didn’t matter to Jesus. What He saw were sheep without a shepherd.

The scribes and Pharisees were the intended shepherds of their day, but Scripture shows them to be very bad ones. They fed themselves and not the flock. They neither strengthened the diseased, nor healed the sick. They failed to bind up that which was broken or to seek that which was lost. Instead, they were stumbling blocks. They caused God’s people to stray with the many extra rules and regulations that were taught as God’s requirements, thereby minimizing the weightier matters of life.



Each of us encounters people every day in the normal activities of life. We see teachers, nurses, neighbors, clerks, druggists, classmates, friends, brothers, and sisters. ***What do you see?*** Do you see them as a family? Are their lives stable? Are they caring for sick family members? Is buying food a daily concern? Does a child need braces? What physical burden are they carrying? Or do you see, as Jesus saw, spiritual voids that are much more of a serious issue than the aforementioned physical and earthly concerns? What do we look for?

We see things that we are looking for, only if we look in the right places. We will not find a flat tire by looking under the car hood, and nor would we observe the universe by examining an oak tree in the front yard. We must concentrate on the important issues of life, the spiritual. Hope, happiness, and salvation are available to all, but we must look in the right place to find them.

“Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:104,105). †

Jerry Rogers lives in Starkville, MS, USA.

Worship — Only Four Possibilities

Steve Vice

From the beginning of time God has called His people to worship Him. Noah, Abraham, David, and Daniel all bowed in humble worship to Elohim (plural for God, Genesis 1:1). Jesus, while in the form of a man, humbly bowed Himself to His heavenly Father (Luke 6:12). Jesus even quoted Moses in Matthew 4:10 saying, “*Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord Your God, and Him only shall you serve.’*”

Jesus, of course, understood the importance of worshipping Jehovah. He had the habit of going into the synagogue every Sabbath day (Luke 4:16). He taught the people to offer unto God the things that are God’s (Luke 20:25). He taught the Samaritan woman that in order to worship God she “*must worship Him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:23,24). Jesus knew that this woman was not worshipping God correctly. He said to her in verse 22, “*You worship what you do not know...*” Not all worship is acceptable to God. Cain and Abel both offered worship to God. Abel worshipped correctly and was accepted. Cain’s worship was rejected (Genesis 4:1-5; Hebrews 11:4). King Saul’s attempt to worship was rejected (1 Samuel 13:9-14). The fact is, God alone decides how He should be worshipped. It is man’s duty to conform to God’s revealed will in the matter.

Worship the Wrong Way with the Wrong Spirit

God had blessed King Uzziah. However, his heart was “lifted up” with pride so that he took it upon himself to go into the Temple and offer burnt incense in worship (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). God had specified that only the priests were to offer this worship. Because of his disobedience, God struck Uzziah with leprosy.

In Acts 17:23, Paul taught the people about “*The Unknown God*”. The Athenians were ignorant about this God and certainly did not worship Him according to the Scriptures. They had to change their ways and their spirit from worshipping many gods before God would accept their worship.

Worship the Wrong Way with the Right Spirit

Apollos was an eloquent and powerful preacher (Acts 18:24-28). He was a man full of zeal for God. Yet, the baptism of John had come to an end when Jesus

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declared that baptism was to be in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Apollos changed his ways when Aquilla and Priscilla taught him about the right baptism.

In Romans 10:1-3, Paul affirmed that the Jews had a zeal for God (right spirit), but their zeal was not according to knowledge. Paul labored tirelessly, trying to get them to change their ways.

Worship the Right Way with the Wrong Spirit

In Matthew 15:3-9, the Jews had been worshipping God in the right way, but their hearts were far from God. Jesus called them hypocrites and declared that their worship was vain. In chapter 23:26-28, Jesus said that outside they appeared righteous, but on the inside they were full of rotteness and dead men's bones.

Paul declared in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 that in the last days there would be men who would have a *form of godliness* but they would deny the power of God. From such, he warns, turn away.

Worship the Right Way with the Right Spirit

Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”* (John 14:15). Here it is clear that both the spirit and form are to be observed. Love is the right heart which motivates us to the right actions. In verse 31, the way that Jesus demonstrated to the world His love to the Father was by keeping His commandments.

God has revealed to us the one and only right way to worship Him. In Acts 2:42, the disciples continued in **the apostles' doctrine** (preaching God's word) and **fellowship** (assembling together as the church, Hebrews 10:25). Every first day of the week they came together to **break bread** (the Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7). They continued in **prayers** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Every Lord's Day they joined their voices together in **song, making the melody in their hearts** to the Lord (acappella, Ephesians 5:19). They were also commanded to **give** of their resources each first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2).

God is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). To be pleasing to the Father, we must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Paul calls upon us to *“test all things”* and to *“prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21; Romans 12:2). Cain failed to do this and his worship was rejected. On the other hand, Abel offered his worship according to faith and it was accepted by God. It is written, *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). †

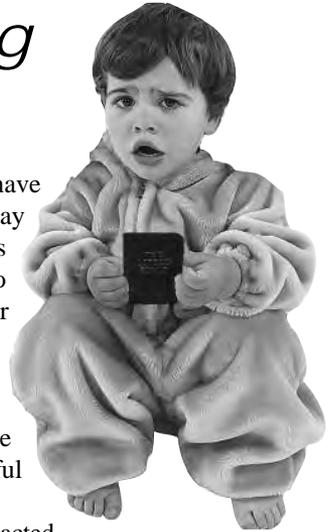
Steve Vice is an elder in the church of Christ in Forest Park, Georgia, USA.

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Are You Playing Church?

Rodney Nulph

One of the great joys that Julene and I have experienced as parents is watching Joshua “play church”. Often times he will get one of his children’s songbooks, stand at the coffee table and begin to “lead” the congregation in songs of praise. Other times Joshua will get his little New Testament and stand at the “pulpit”, which is actually our coffee table, and preach his little heart out to anyone who will listen, while he pounds his little hand upon the table. Joshua “plays” church, and what a beautiful and encouraging sight it is to behold!



However, this same sight is sometimes reenacted by those who should not be “playing” church but actually should be involved wholeheartedly in the worship to God and the work of His church. Brethren who are redeemed by the blood of Christ and who are partakers of the Holy Spirit often become guilty of living in the world six days a week, only to slip into their Sunday clothes in order to “play” church, soothe their consciences, and fool the brethren. They are like actors on a stage, learning their lines, wearing a costume, and going through the motions of playing a role.

Merely acting like a Christian will not make one a true Christian! Someone has well said, “Sitting in church will no more make one a Christian than sitting in a hen house will make one a chicken.” How true that is! Playing church is incredibly sweet when the player is only 2 years old, but not when he is 14 or 24, and so on. Assembling with the saints and participating in the work and life of the congregation should be enjoyable, but it is not a game!

Four hundred years before Christ, a generation arose that would not take their worship seriously. Malachi was enlisted by God to address this sorry remnant who dishonored God: “*A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’*” (Malachi 1:6). They treated the table of the Lord with contempt: “*You offer defiled food on My altar. But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’*” By

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saying, *‘The table of the LORD is contemptible...’*” (vs. 7,8).

The people of Judah sneered at worship as a weariness: *“But you profane it, in that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’ You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!’ And you sneer at it,” says the LORD of hosts. “And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?” says the LORD. “But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished — for I am a great King,” says the LORD of hosts, “and My name is to be feared among the nations”* (vs. 12-14).

These fallen people substituted their own whims for His commands, celebrating divorce and every immorality: *“And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ ‘Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? and why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,’ says the LORD of hosts...”* (2:13-17).

God complained that they were robbing Him: *“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation”* (3:8-10), and if you are just “playing church” today, you are no less guilty!

Is your Sunday suit or dress just a costume to disguise your six-days-a-week true identity? Then, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:12). Do you pray without confidence, study absentmindedly, eat and drink the Lord’s Supper thoughtlessly? Is your contribution but a gesture and no more a sacrifice? *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...”* (Revelation 2:5), were the words of Jesus to the church at Ephesus. Readers who are of age should stop “playing church” and start living it with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). We should echo the sentiment of the Psalmist, *“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD”* (Psalm 122:1).

What about you and me? Are we merely going through the motions? Are we just playing church today? Christians, let’s not play church, but let’s live it out in every facet of our everyday lives! †

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Before the Supper

Dan R. Owen

What happens in your life before the supper, the sacred supper, in which we demonstrate our communion with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and our fellow ransomed souls?

Before the supper in many lives there are hectic, laborious Saturdays, late nights of entertainment, shortened nights of sleep, a chaotic morning filled with rushing and short tempers, a frantic dash to the church building, and a late arrival after the second song. Barely alert, we endure the sermon and greet the sacred supper with thoughts of lunch, the afternoon's activities, and precious few...of Christ.

Before that supper long ago, as thirteen men ate and drank in that upper room, much transpired. *Before that supper* there was sin — universal, rebellious, destructive sin — which put a chasm between every sinner and his God. *Before that supper* there was proclamation. It was proclamation of God's kingdom, God's love, and man's need of submission. There was also demonstration of God's rule, as blindness was driven from sightless eyes and demons were herded from people's bodies by the command of the righteous One. *Before that supper* there was



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preparation. A room was prepared with food and wine. A donkey was secured and a triumphal entry made amid cheering crowds, ending at God's temple. The last warnings of God's prophet were issued, complete with weeping and woes, before He left the temple and proceeded...*to the supper.*

During that supper, as they thought of God's deliverance, there was heartbreaking betrayal. There was confused anticipation, as with bread and wine He ordered His guests on future occasions to, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" Christ's supper with the twelve was only the dry run. It was only the supper to prepare us for the kingdom supper, as the Lord said, "*I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.*" *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*" (Matthew 26:29).

*Before the kingdom supper...*there was obedience, complete and perfect. There was perfect atonement, a fountain of sinless blood, a spotless lamb sacrificed. There was satisfaction given for every sin of ages past and ages yet to come. *Before the kingdom supper* there was a demonstration of love. It was love in deed and truth, impossible to be questioned. *Before the kingdom supper* there was validation. It was empirical resurrection validation of the proclamation, the demonstration, the Savior's invitation, the atonement, the love of God, and the promises He had given. *Before the kingdom supper* there was the outpouring of God's Spirit with wind and tongues of fire. There was faith in the risen Lord, repentance, confession, and baptism, as souls were united to God.

At the first kingdom supper there was great joy. It was the joy of the redeemed, the reconciled, the forgiven. On that day, sinners knew the wall that had separated them from God had been broken down.

There was great thanksgiving for what God had done and was continuing to do for those who were born into the Family through the blood of Christ.

There was the sharing of bread and wine by those who shared salvation, grace, and eternal hope!

There was proclamation of the power of that remembered death.

Each week since then, people have gathered for the kingdom supper in places around the world!

Surely we, *before this supper,* must be diligent with preparation and anticipation, so that with truly thankful hearts we can eat the feast which shows our union with God and with His Son Jesus Christ. †

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The Communion of His Body and His Blood

Brad Choate

There are many mysteries in the Bible, but the one that stands out to me is the scene that takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before Jesus is arrested.

Until now, we've seen an unstoppable Jesus. He's healing the sick, casting out demons, raising Lazarus, making the wind and waters obey Him, rebuking the Pharisees, cleansing the Temple — a force to be reckoned with. The Jewish leaders were fearful of Him and His influence, and they conspired to have Him killed.

Jesus has returned to Jerusalem. He has just shared a Passover meal with His closest, dearest friends. And now, He prays in a garden alone. And there, we get a very intimate glimpse of His humanity.

Matthew 26:36-43: *“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’”*

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?’ He asked Peter, ‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.’”

“He went away a second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.”

Jesus prayed THREE times that God take “this cup” from Him. This is an amazing moment to me. Jesus is fully God and fully human, and here — at this

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one time in His human life — “His will” and “His Father’s will” are in conflict, but as He says each time, “*Yet not as I will, but as You will.*” Jesus remains faithful, deferring to the Father.

What is even more striking to me is that this is the only time in the Bible where Jesus makes a request of the Father that is not granted outright. Think about that! If God had taken that cup away, it would not have meant salvation for man. There was literally no other possible way to save us, or it would have been done. And that means that **God made a choice to sacrifice Jesus rather than spare Him that night.** Unlike with Abraham and Isaac, there was no suitable ram caught in the bushes to offer instead. His only Son was the sacrifice needed to take away our sin.

This is one of the passages of the Bible that was not based on eyewitness testimony. Jesus was alone with God there in the Garden. This insight comes from the Holy Spirit who inspired these writings. I am grateful that this was revealed to us; it shows how dear this sacrifice was. As Jesus said, “*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*”

I know that what Jesus was anticipating that night was not the physical pain He would endure, but the separation from God. As He was nearing death on the cross, He called out, “*Why have You forsaken me?*” God did not answer His prayer by removing that cup. Be thankful that He did not. And be thankful that Jesus drank it... Not just a sip, but He drank it fully and uttered, “*It is finished*”, with His dying breath.

Jesus was given the strength to bear it, and He bore it for us all.

Prayer for the bread: “Our Father, we give thanks for this bread that represents the body of your Son, a body that was sacrificed so that we may live and be justified in your sight. We cannot fully know or understand the nature of that sacrifice but we are eternally grateful for it. Thank you for this bread; bless it as we commune together. In His name. Amen.”

Prayer for the cup: “Heavenly Father, we also ask that you bless this cup that represents the blood of your Son, blood that washes us of our iniquity. Thank you for Jesus, Who drank the cup of your wrath that we were destined to drink, and Who gave us this cup of grace to remember Him, a cup that is both sweet and life-giving. Only His blood could possibly wash our dirty robes as white as snow. Thank you for this gift, in His name Amen.” †

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5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY GEMS FROM PROVERBS

Paula Bates

1. Proverbs 31:10 Who can find a _____ wife? For her worth is far above _____.
2. Proverbs 20:15 There is _____ and a multitude of _____, but the lips of knowledge are a _____.
3. Proverbs 17:3 The refining pot is for _____ and the furnace for _____, but the Lord tests the _____.
4. Proverbs 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like _____ of _____ in settings of _____.
5. Proverbs 3:1,2 My son, do not forget my _____, but let your heart keep my _____; for length of days and long _____ and _____ they will add to you.
6. Proverbs 10:12 _____ stirs up strife, but _____ covers all sins.
7. Proverbs 17:1 Better is a dry morsel with _____, than a _____ full of feasting with _____.



1. Virtuous, rubies
2. Gold, rubies, precious jewels
3. Silver, gold, hearts
4. Apples, gold, silver
5. Law, commands, life, peace
6. Hatred, love
7. Quietness, house, strife

Answers:

The BETTER Way

Danny Tunnell

What is happening in America that we should provide our citizens with 2.67 lawyers per thousand people, but Japan needs only 0.10? Two-thirds of the lawyers on earth live in the United States, while we account for only 6 percent of the world's population. Even the White House is occupied by a president and first lady, both of whom are lawyers.

What is happening in America that our courts are clogged by divorce suits? What has happened in America that has so altered our moral structure? "Live-ins" who separate sue for monetary settlements. Gays are no longer in the closet. Abortion is legal. And crime is on the rampage.

Is there a better way to live than this?

The better way is found in God's Word. *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word"* (Psalm 119:9). *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee"* (Psalm 119:11).

"And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31)

"To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either"
(Luke 6:28-30)

There is a better way. Jesus said, *"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."*

There is a better way. *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple"* (Psalm 19:7),

The Lord's way is the better way.





THANKLESS JOBS

Alan Smith

I heard recently about a stay-at-home Mom. One evening she went to a PTA meeting and her husband and her oldest daughter got together and decided they would clean up the kitchen for her. They put up all the food, wiped all the counters, washed all the pots and put them away, put the dishes in the dishwasher and ran it. They swept and mopped the floors and then sat down, and awaited her arrival.

Two hours later she returned from the meeting, took off her coat, hung it up, walked through the kitchen into the den, grabbed the remote control, and began watching television. They followed her over to her chair and stood by her side. Finally she felt them looking over her shoulder and looked up at them and said, “What?”

Her husband said, “The kitchen.”

“The kitchen. What?”

“The kitchen. We cleaned up the kitchen. Didn’t you notice? It’s sparkling clean. We cleaned it for you.”

The woman replied, “Yes, I noticed. Thankless job, isn’t it?”

It is so true that a lot of what our wives and mothers do goes unnoticed and unappreciated. Please don’t let that happen in your home! But the same thing can happen at work or in the church. My guess is that there are many people around you who do important tasks but who go unnoticed and unappreciated.

For example, when is the last time you thanked one of your elders for the work that they do? These men have a very difficult job that involves a great deal of responsibility (and they likely don’t get paid a dime for their efforts). They spend countless hours leading, guiding and shepherding the flock. Take a

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moment to let them know how much you appreciate their efforts.

Most churches don't give much thought to the teachers for their children's Bible classes (except when they're absent!). We just assume they'll show up and do their job, without considering the hours of preparation each week, not to mention their willingness to deal with a room full of active (and sometimes unruly) children, week after week. Take a moment to let your children's teachers know how much you appreciate them.

The list could go on and on because there are so many people around you who serve in so many ways, and many of them don't want the spotlight. They prefer to work behind the scenes. But, please don't take the efforts of others for granted. Keep your eyes open to the good work that others are doing and "*Render therefore to all their due...honor to whom honor*" (Romans 13:7). Thank you to all of you who serve in a variety of "thankless jobs". †

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One Phone Call Can

Show your concern

Learn of a need

Encourage the
downhearted

Lift the depressed

Strengthen the weak

Cheer the sad

Comfort the lonely

Reassure the suffering

Promote a good work

Render a service

Murmur

Bonnie Rushmore

Usually when one considers the term “murmur,” we immediately think of complaints or one who complains. However, the term “murmur” has a slightly different meaning. The second definition of an English dictionary gives the following definition for the word murmur, “a mumbled or private expression of discontent.” While murmuring is complaining, it is done quietly and often privately, thereby causing an undertow of discontent among those influenced by the murmurer. *Vine’s Dictionary* gives the following definitions for the Greek words meaning murmur or murmuring:

A. Verbs 1. gonguzo, “to mutter, murmur, grumble, say anything in a low tone”...the word “murmur” itself, is used of the laborers in the parable of the householder, Matt 20:11; of the scribes and Pharisees, against Christ, Luke 5:30; of the Jews, John 6:41,43, of the disciples, 6:61; of the people, 7:32 (of debating secretly); of the Israelites, 1 Cor 10:10 (twice), where it is also used in a warning to believers. (Moulton and Milligan, Vocab.). 2. diagonguzo, lit., “to murmur through” (dia, i.e., “through a whole crowd,” or “among themselves”), is always used of indignant complaining, Luke 15:2; 19:7. 3. embriomaomai is rendered “murmured against” in Mark 14:5; it expresses indignant displeasure. Note: For stenazo, James 5:9, RV, “murmur,” see GRIEVE, No. 3. B. Noun. gongusmos, “a murmuring, muttering” (akin to A, No. 1), is used (a) in the sense of secret debate among people, John 7:12 (as with the verb in v. 32); (b) of displeasure or complaining (more privately than in public), said of Grecian Jewish converts against Hebrews, Acts 6:1; in general admonitions, Phil 2:14; 1 Peter 4:9, RV, “murmuring” (KJV “grudging”).

The English and Greek definitions are the same for the word murmur: one who grumbles and complains quietly in a private manner. The Israelites were noted for their continual murmuring. Moses led a group of rebellious, murmuring individuals from Egypt to the Promised Land. Consider the following examples:

- Exodus 15:24, The Israelites murmured over a lack of water.
- Exodus 16:2, The Israelites murmured over a lack of food.
- Exodus 17, The Israelites murmured over the lack of water.
- Numbers 12, Miriam and Aaron murmured about the nationality of Moses’

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wife when in reality they wanted an equal leadership position with Moses.

- Numbers 14, Ten of the twelve spies declared they cannot take the Promised Land. The children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and wanted to appoint a new leader to return them to Egypt. This time the murmuring caused the Israelite nation to wander in the wilderness for 40 years with all 20-year-olds and upward dying in the wilderness, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.



- Numbers 16, Korah, Dathim and Abirim murmured against Moses' leadership and Aaron's

priesthood. The Israelites murmured against Aaron and Moses after the death of Korah, Dathim and Abirim, and all their families when these men questioned Moses' authority and Aaron's priesthood.

- Numbers 20, The Israelites murmured against Moses for the lack of fruits and water. The constant murmuring of the Israelites caused Moses to lose patience with them, which prohibited him from entering the Promised Land as well.

A study of the Israelite nation and God's reaction toward those who murmured clearly shows that God views murmuring as a sinful activity. Psalm 106 gives an overview of the rebellious nation of Israel, God's anger toward them and His mercy upon them when they repented.

The New Testament also gives examples of God's people murmuring. In Acts 6:1 while the church was in its infancy, the Greeks murmured against the Hebrews about the neglect of the Greek widows. Although God did not swiftly punish the murmurers, the apostles were quick to resolve the problem.

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Paul and Peter admonished Christians not to murmur. Philippians 2:14 says, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings.” In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Paul gave an overview of the Israelite wanderings. He explained that these events were recorded as an example for us, so that we can learn from their mistakes. Included in the list of sins for which the Israelites were punished is murmuring. Peter commanded Christians to show hospitality to others and do so without murmuring (1 Peter 4:9).

Satan will use murmuring individuals to destroy the good works being accomplished within a congregation. One murmuring individual can stir several individuals into discontent, and then the Lord’s work falters and fails if the problem is not quickly resolved. I have seen this happen! Do not be a tool in Satan’s hand destroying the Lord’s church and all its good works. Precious souls are lost because Christians murmur and complain about other Christians, and non-Christians want no part of the Lord’s Church. Murmuring and complaining is a sin for which we will be held accountable on Judgment Day. †

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“Boring! That preacher couldn’t be any more boring if his life depended upon it!”

“I just didn’t get anything out of the services, today! Did you?”

“Who do the elders think they are to tell me...? Why I have half a mind to...”

Spiritual Bargain-Hunting?

Jack W. Carter

How many times have we asked the question, “What do I owe?” How many times will we ask it in the years ahead? When a service is rendered, we rightfully expect to pay a price. Usually, we measure the amount of the debt owed by the value of the service rendered. Most often we are willing to pay a reasonable debt.

The question of what we owe is an initial consideration in reference to the service Christ rendered. I assume that everyone who approaches Christ for the spiritual blessings found in Him is very aware that there is a debt involved.

Well, that may not be altogether true. I can remember hearing and reading that we really owe nothing because Christ paid everything for us. Not very many occupy this position, I’m happy to report, but the fact that there are even a few testifies to the spiritual bargain-hunting that is going on in the Christ/man relationship. Beginning with the few who feel that there is no debt, we advance to such a widely varied value assessment of what we owe Christ that we couldn’t list them all here.

It is a little strange, because Christ has made it very clear. The debt we owe is equal to the sacrifice He made. He gave Himself, and that is what we are to do. Because we were dead in our trespasses and sins, we had lost everything in our relationship with God. When Christ made us alive again in Him, He did something that we could not do for ourselves. If it had not been for Christ, we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins. We had lost *everything*, and thus had a rightful claim on *nothing* — we owe everything. Our Savior died to make us alive. Now He wants us to totally dedicate the life that we could not have had without His sacrifice. It’s really that simple.

Holding anything back is to place a limited value on what Jesus accomplished for us by His sacrificial death. This is why He said, “*You must surrender everything to me if you want to be My disciple.*” There is no biblical provision for bargain-hunting or any kind of negotiation. †

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The Lifetime Guarantee!

Betty Burton Choate

We're always looking for the "Lifetime Guarantee" on things that come into our possession. That paper brings us a sweet sense of security, provided the company has a good reputation for standing behind its products. If a new coffee maker stops working, in the grand scheme of life that is no big deal. If a dishwasher refuses to run just after the warranty is out, that pinches, but we can manage a replacement without too much challenge to the monthly budget. If a vehicle suddenly has to be replaced, that is a larger, longer-term commitment, and can be extremely painful. But, looking back at life's challenges in the material world, through the years, we've survived, met the crises, and we've moved on past them.

However, it isn't in the world of material possessions that we face our greatest insecurities and most daunting challenges. It is in life itself, with all the unseen dangers and trials that lurk along the path on which we are traveling. Where is the "guarantee" that will undergird us and assure us that we will come out safely on the other side, with our spirits intact and whole before God?

God offers a "Lifetime Guarantee" to every child of His. True, we have to accept it, fill out the form and send it in – but He has done His part. Is the guarantee any good? Titus 1:2 states in clear language: "... *in hope of eternal life, which God, **who cannot lie, promised before times eternal***" So the guarantee is ironclad.

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What is our part of the agreement?

First: The contract is only between God and His children. So, one must be a baptized believer, a member of the Lord's church, in order to have access to the guarantee.

Second: Since the product being placed under warranty is *yourself*, you must totally submit your life, your mind, your body, your possessions, your everything to Him. *He can't take care of what you have not entrusted in His hands.* This kind of submission can well be expressed in the frequent prayer: "Father, everything I am and everything I have is Yours. Use my thoughts, my strength, and my time today as You see best. *Please don't let me get in Your way.*"

Now, you've registered God's purchase of yourself, and you are His responsibility. You can voice your confidence in the warranty in these words: "*I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day*" (2 Timothy 1:12).

What does His warranty say?

"... I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

"... And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do..." (John 14:13).

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (14:15).

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him'" (John 14:18,23).

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have [‘have’ — already, it is ours] the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14,15).

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

That statement is the clincher. He promises:

ALWAYS: There will be no situation and no occasion in which He will fail.

ALL SUFFICIENCY: He guarantees that there will be enough of whatever you need to do what He wants you to do. True, sometimes – looking down the road, or the day or the hour – you may not see how there can possibly be enough time or enough money or enough of self to meet the challenge, but go on by FAITH. He has promised, and it is His responsibility to work out the details. [And sometimes the only way God can alert us to the fact that we are trying to go through a door He has closed is to deny us the "all sufficiency" we ourselves expected. *If* He wants it done, the door will be open, and the sufficiency will be there.]

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IN ALL THINGS: Often we don't even know what we need, but God sees all the way to the end of the road, and He guarantees that nothing will be lacking.

AN ABUNDANCE: He repeats His promise, for the sake of our struggling faith.

FOR EVERY GOOD WORK: Well, here is another condition for us to meet: our focus and goal must be involvement in the good work that makes up the life of the Christian. He designed our bodies, so He knows we must have food, exercise, relaxation, and fellowship, but these are peripheral to our main focus in life – our work with Him.

Then, like the comforting and reassuring Father that He is, He takes us on His lap and gently says: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, ... whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things”* (Philippians 4:6-8).

Then God looks us right in the eye and says, concerning the problems that we will inevitably have to face: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in [your] weakness.”*

So we answer, with gratitude and confidence, that we will be thankful for the challenges, because those are the times we draw most from the strength that Christ, our Brother, supplies. *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

And on those occasions when Satan has been doing his worst to hurt us, God pulls us to His breast and He says, *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. SEE [and He holds up His hand before my eyes], I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands...”* (Isaiah 49:15,16).

Then He puts me down and sends me on about His work, and, as I turn, I hear the happiest and most beautiful singing! *“The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing”* (Zephaniah 3:17). †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder and publisher of *The Voice of Truth International*.

My Place of Peace

**There is a rock
In a little clearing in the woods:
A healing place for me.**

**Looking back to childish years,
To feelings and emotions
Untried and strange,
This place, most often,
Was my refuge from the world.**

**I think
I might not
Perhaps
Have safely lived those years
Without this shrine.**

**Later,
Married
And living far away,
Still, the solitude was in my heart,
Strength to draw from
When the need was great.**

**And now, again,
My little spot has been restored,
My place of peace.**

**I wonder, if
In God's vision of the road ahead
He sees
Perhaps
How great my need will be
And,
Out of mercy,
Has restored this place to me?**

Betty Burton Choate

“My Child Doesn’t Like Bible Class”

Charles Curtis

“My child doesn’t like to go to Bible School. What can I do about it?” Here are some suggestions from those who have studied this problem:

1. **You can be constructive.** Don’t criticize or blame the teacher, the lesson, or the child. A negative attitude only complicates matters, and hardly ever helps.
2. **You can be enthusiastic about the class,** the teacher, the lesson, the other children, and about preparing for the Lord’s day. Kindly (but firmly) ignore any negative expression by the child.
3. **You can prepare through the week for the class.** Do not rush, scold, or nag on Sunday morning or Wednesday night; this will only make things worse. Prepare clothes ahead of time. Get up early enough on Sunday that the child can leisurely finish his morning routine.
4. **You can help the child participate in class.** Have him select and take flowers for the class table, or in some other way make him feel a part of the class. Participation increases interest. Present him a challenge so that he will seek to favorably respond.
5. **You can try to take one or more of his neighborhood friends with you to class.** Offer to stop and pick up other children. Helping someone else to attend adds importance to the event.
6. **You can expand your activities at home.** Sing Bible songs as you work. Repeat Bible stories or incidents as you have opportunity. Familiarity with Bible material helps the child to respond.
7. **You can help your child through prayer.** Pray with him about his class, teacher, and friends. We all need to pray about the teaching of God’s Word.
8. **Help your child to prepare his Bible school lesson** for the following week. Read aloud to him each day. This will help him to establish the habit of daily Bible reading. †

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More Than Tendering Our Tears

Rod Kyle

Child abuse is a prevalent practice in most communities. No statistics need be tendered. But what we need to tender is our tears. Does it break your heart to hear of yet another child falling victim to the brutal bullying of an out-of-control adult? What can be done?

Should we ban parents from punishing their children? This seems to be the general thrust of many angry “child rearing” experts’ comments. Pass the problem onto the politicians! Let the state take care of it! Deep down inside, we all know that this is not the solution. So what is?

Have you considered the biblical solution? Brush aside the cobwebs of “pop-psychology” and misapplied maxims like “violence begets violence”. Think. Does God tell us that punishment (either physical or psychological) is an appropriate way to deal with misbehavior? Consider the wisdom of His Word...

“...fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

The message is clear here. Parents must exercise the very best of self-control. But they must rear their children with discipline. This Greek word *paidia* means “training by action” and instruction, and this Greek work *nouthesia* means “training by word”. These two forms of discipline are mentioned in other parts of the Bible.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15).

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24).

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In fact, Proverbs 19:18 goes so far as to say that a parent who does not discipline his child has set his heart on his child's destruction. Think about that.

Other Bible verses teach that discipline is part of true parental love (Hebrews 12:6-11). But at the same time, the Bible condemns violent and angry discipline (Galatians 5:20, 1 Timothy 5:22). Instead, all parental discipline requires the ingredients of self-control, patience, and kindness, bound together with biblical love (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

God's plan for child rearing is perfect. Imperfect people must strive to stick to His perfect plan. When parents succeed, many other people benefit. Instead of highlighting the failures in our midst, perhaps it is time to honor those who have succeeded. This would be more than tendering our tears. Is it time we all went back to the Bible? †

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.

Holding My Son's Hand

Floyd Kaiser

**When I feel his little hand in mine,
I'm reminded of how swiftly passes time.
Right now, it's so small and so easily directed;
As I steer him through dangers, to him undetected.
I'm in control of my son's turn of events,
As long as his hand to me has been lent.
I point the way, to the left and then to the right;
Plotting a course by heaven's true light.
But, I know that soon my son will be grown;
Perhaps holding a little hand of his own.
When the time comes for his hand to release,
I pray he will know that my love does not cease.
In my final days, when the shadows are deep;
I will feel his little hand and peacefully sleep.**

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Jim Poland

Marriage is for life. Marriage in the sight of God and His kingdom makes no allowance for divorce, except for fornication. This is because of the Creator's arrangement (Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-5). The prophet Malachi was inspired to write to God's people that "*He hates divorce*" (Malachi 2:13-16). Divorce had caused their worship to be disregarded by God, because they had not kept their vows. God sees divorce as a violent act against His will and against one another.

Christ does not view marriage from man's laws and interpretations (Matthew 19:38; Mark 10:2-12). Marriage is of God: He designed it, He regulates it, and it is accountable to Him!

The laws of the land must not be allowed to corrupt God's plan for marriage. Jesus distinguished between God's will and human interpretation. There needs to be an unalterable, determined commitment by both marrying parties. This is necessary to supply the needed stability for family and growth. People mature and change and develop through the years. Adjustments must be made. Marriage is for people mature enough to make and keep this kind of commitment.

Changes usually don't come in the way you may hope, but they *will* come. Religion is an area of set values that are hard to change. Adjustments must be made *toward* each other, not away. This requires a 100% commitment on each

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one's part to work through this life and its influences.

We must understand both the marriage institution and the church in order to know God's way (Ephesians 5:21-33)! We must understand the marriage institution if we are going to understand the church institution. We must understand the church's relationship to Christ in order to understand the relationship of husbands and wives (Ephesians 4:4-6). There needs to be a commitment to the Lord and to one another.

Marriage has a structure and pattern and organization from God (Matthew 19:3-8; Ephesians 5:21-33). This has a direct bearing on our service to the Lord. There are God-given roles for men and women, for husbands and wives. This must not be allowed to be a power struggle between them. Although different, there must be respect in the sight of God, not a struggle over supposed superior values; both are valuable to the Lord and His way.

It is in scriptural marriage that children learn about Christ and His church. This is where they learn the eternal value of salvation and the church which is made up of the saved (Acts 2:38,41,47).

In marriage there is no room in God's sight for feminism, machoism, rebellion, superiority, tyranny, deceit, or manipulation. Serving and submitting to one another in the Lord is always right!

Marriage must be a separate and exclusive relationship between a man and a woman until death parts them! Salvation is a separate and exclusive relationship between Christ and His church for life! These relationships must not be adulterated by unfaithfulness! †

Jim Poland preaches the Gospel in Carthage, Missouri, USA.

Want to Have a Strong Family?

Daily read the Bible together.

Daily pray together.

Express appreciation to and for one another.

Freely and gladly forgive one another.

Spend time together.

Worship together.

Play together as a family.

In times of difficulty and crisis, lean on your faith.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Christian Parents, Be Responsible!

Rex Banks

Our Ministry of Education determines how each school curriculum measures up. But clearly any such prescribed standard inevitably reflects the values, the mores and attitudes of those who devise it, and for many people therein lies the problem. In recent years our legislators have legalized homosexuality and sought to dismantle the family. It's not encouraging to know that these same legislators are responsible for setting up a system of "values clarification" which enables students to "explore different values and viewpoints and clarify their own values." Pluralism and moral relativism may be acceptable to humanistic governments but they are not acceptable to parents who want their children to be part of "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.*" Not long ago the Principal of a leading boys' school rejoiced in the fact that there was "a more widespread acceptance of homosexuality" at the school, but again Christian parents are hardly likely to see this as a sign of progress and enlightenment.

In our humanistic society there is an urgent need for Christian parents to take responsibility for the education of their children and to impart those values which are derived from the very nature of the Creator. Long ago Moses urged his people:

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead" (Deuteronomy 6:4-8).

Following the death of Joshua "... *there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel*" (Judges 2:10). Lacking this vital knowledge of their Redeemer "*they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger*" (v 12). Christian parents must inoculate their children against the "gods" of humanism, and this involves replacing "values clarification" with "Thus says the Lord" when the important questions of life arise. †

Rex Banks is a preacher of the Gospel in Hamilton, New Zealand.

PROVERBS 17:22



All that hot, dry weather that folks down in Texas have been having is no laughing matter. It's so bad that one fellow in Longview said he killed a mosquito that was carrying a canteen.

Another fellow out in Lubbock said the chicken farmers were giving the chickens crushed ice to keep them from laying hard-boiled eggs.

Then, lo and behold, a few weeks ago there was a fire hydrant in Austin that was seen bribing a dog.



Police officer: "Excuse me, but your dog has been chasing a man on his bicycle."

Dog owner: "That's ridiculous! It couldn't have been my dog. Why, that lazy rascal can't even ride a bicycle!"



The bride was escorted down the

aisle, and when she reached the front where the attendants, the groom, and the preacher were standing, she suddenly noticed that the groom was standing there with his golf bag and clubs at his side.

She couldn't believe her eyes, and then whispered, "What are your **golf clubs** doing here?"

He looked her right in the eye and asked in a rather loud whisper, "This isn't going to take **all day**, is it?"



A young boy watched his older brother be baptized at the church building. All the way home the younger boy sobbed the whole time. His father repeatedly asked him what was wrong.

Finally, the boy replied, "The preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys."



Sometimes women are overly suspicious of their husbands. When Adam stayed out very late for a few nights, Eve became upset.

"You're running around with other women," she told her mate.

"Eve, honey, you're being unreasonable," Adam answered. "You know you're the only woman on earth."

The quarrel continued until Adam fell asleep, only to be awakened by

PROVERBS 17:22

a strange pain in the chest. It was his darling Eve poking him rather vigorously about the torso.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Adam demanded.

“Counting your ribs!” said Eve.



A newcomer to Seattle arrived on a rainy day. He got up the next day and it rained all day.

Same story the next day...and the next.

He went to get some lunch and saw a man walking along, so he asked him, “Say, does it ever stop raining around here?”

The man replied, “How should I know? I’ve only lived here 8 years.”



A very respectable looking man was walking down the street when he noticed a young boy on his tiptoes trying to press a doorbell on a house across the street. Although he was trying very hard, the boy was not tall enough to reach the doorbell.

After watching the boy’s efforts for a moment, the man walked across the street, up the steps to the porch, came up behind the little fellow, and lifted him up a couple of feet.

The boy giggled and gave the bell a solid ring.

Crouching down to the child’s level, the man smiled nicely and asked, “And now what, my little man?”

With a mischievous grin he said, “Now we run!!!”



A grandfather was walking past his young granddaughter’s room one night when he saw her kneeling beside her bed, with head bowed and hands folded, repeating the alphabet.

“What are you doing?” he asked her.

She answered, “I’m saying my prayers, but I couldn’t think of just what I wanted to say, so I’m just saying all the letters of the alphabet, and God can put them together however He thinks best.”



A crew of highway maintenance workers was sent to repair some road signs that vandals had knocked down in a forested area. The first one they put back up was a symbol warning of a deer crossing.

As they moved down the road to repair the next sign, one crew member looked back and spotted a deer running across the highway. Turning to a co-worker, he said, “I wonder how long he’s been waiting to cross?”



SILVER LININGS

Alex Gibson

Have you ever met someone who is always happy? They *are* out there — but for most people being upset or angry is a common experience. We feel like our worlds are out of control, and there's nothing we can do about it. That's normal enough to me. In a two-month span, my truck has been in and out of the shop, with the bike following; money seems to disappear as soon as it comes in, and trying to solve even the simplest of problems is met with lots of headaches.

Why? Personally it doesn't matter. God will work something out of whatever situation I find myself in.

But I would like to shift the focus here. Most people would try to find the silver lining. Why bother with that? God has promised a bright, sunny day for you, but to make the garden bloom you need some rain. Or you could say it takes dark and bright colors to paint a masterpiece; or whatever metaphor you want to use for saying things will get better; or that it's ok.

That's not what's important here, in the least. God's good will and blessing for you are sure, and the suffering in this world is not worthy to be compared to the glory that He has in store for those that love Him. By inspiration, Paul said

HEY YOU KIDS!

that very thing in Romans 8:18: “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” The important thing is to understand that whatever comes your way in life can be used to His glory, and may be used by Him to further bless you. Our challenge is to see beyond the dim veil of this world and to the glory of God.

For example, when I have trouble and am forced to rely on my friends or family, it keeps my pride in check. When I am unable to take care of things on my own, it isn't pride that asks for help, it's humility. That's one way God can add to my humility, as well as to build my relationships with friends and family. And the experience may even become a subject for testimony and encouragement to others. *But without the initial fall, how can God help me up?*

Is that to say we should ask for hard times and trials? I wouldn't, personally, because there seem to be enough of those already! I would ask for God to bless me, though. God wants us to be more than ourselves, and to bless us every day. Christ said, “*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10).

Why not ask for that abundant life by name? That means that even in our hard times and bad days and weeks and months and years, God wants to bless us, to bless you, to bless me. Having felt anger and loss, as well as joy and fullness, I can say that it is better to have the latter, that is what you were born for and is the best.

God's purpose for you and me is to be full and complete through our relationships with Him and with others. So why would many people in this world be broken-hearted and weary? Because we live in a fallen world, and Satan uses obstacles to defeat us. As Christians, instead of giving in to Satan and the discouragement he brings, let God work through you and your life, regardless of your situation. Keep asking and seeking Him and finding Him in everything you do.

Yes, God is working His purposes in your life, whether you understand it or not. That's not to say you have no choice in the matter, but that His will is greater than our circumstances, if we have given ourselves to Him. We need to realize that His will is to bless us, through all the ups and downs that come into our lives.

But in this particular article, I am asking you how God is working His purpose in your life, regardless of what's going on. And what are you doing, for heaven's sake? I'm asking you to write me with your feedback, for use in future articles.

God bless, Alex.

†

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Scripture Search

David Deffenbaugh

At least twice in the New Testament religious groups were cited for searching the Scriptures, once in commendation and once in condemnation. Concerning Jews to whom Paul preached in Berea, it is said, “*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scripture daily to see whether these things were so*” (Acts 17:11). To the Jews who opposed Jesus, He said, “*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life*” (John 5:39-40).

Not all forays into the Word of Life are commendable or even profitable. Satan quoted Scripture in his attempt to destroy the mission of Jesus, and enemies of Paul were known to distort his writings and other Scripture (2 Peter 3:16). In God’s Word there is to be found that which He would have man to know. So certain is that message that God intends for it to be understood. The contemporaries of Jesus were condemned for missing

it, and those contemporary to Paul were commended for their honest and diligent search for it. It was (and is) a knowable, discernible, definable, and defensible message.

Too often, misnamed Bible study classes amount to nothing more than sharing impressions of God’s Word. Postmodern literary studies suggest that the only validity of literature is the encounter of the reader. Never mind any thought or idea of the author’s intent or purpose. Instead, what was the experience of the reader’s encounter with the text? Jesus obviously was no postmodern thinker. Those Jews had missed what God wanted them to see. The ones in Berea found what God wanted them to see.

Not only must our concern be to spend time in God’s Word, but also to resolve that our time and effort will be spent in coming to know the message God has placed there and insists that we come to know.

By all means, search the Scriptures! †

David Deffenbaugh preaches for the Center Hill congregation in Paragould, Arkansas, USA.

Judging Others

Jerry A. Jenkins



Jesus said, “*Judge not that ye be not judged*” (Matthew 7:1). What did the Lord mean by this simple seven word sentence? Is all judging wrong? If this were the only statement on this subject in the Bible one might easily conclude that this is true. All judging is not wrong. Please observe that it is not wrong for a federal or civil judge to decide the sentencing of a convicted criminal. Moses sat in

judgment from morning till evening. “*And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening*” (Exodus 18:13).

If all judging is wrong, not only would it prohibit magistrates, it would indict the Almighty. God is described in the Holy Scriptures as judging. “*And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance*” (Genesis 15:14). Abraham raises a question, “*That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (Genesis 18:25).

In addition to the Father being declared as judging, the Son also is described as a judge. “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul told those in Athens to repent, “*because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*” (Acts 17:31).

Christians are not prohibited from all judging, in fact, just the opposite is true. “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*” (John 7:24). It is wrong to judge the motives of another. It is wrong to make judgment when there is no way of determining the accuracy of that judgment. It is not wrong when God has spoken on a subject and God’s will is applied.

An example of righteous judgment would be affirming that one is not saved when he has been sprinkled instead of immersed in baptism. Equally true would be affirming that one who teaches salvation before and without baptism is not teaching

TEXTUAL STUDIES

the doctrine of God. Often when God's Word is applied to the doctrine of salvation before baptism, advocates of this false teaching affirm that one is judging them and violating the command to "*judge not*". This is simply not the case. When God has spoken on any subject and His Word is applied, such action is not judging! †

Jerry Jenkins (1936-2010) preached for 44 years for the Roebuck Parkway congregation in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

Backsliding Heifer

Louis Rushmore

Hosea 4:16 illustrates the rebellious disposition of the northern kingdom of Israel by referring to that nation as a "*backsliding heifer*". The Hebrew word for "*backsliding*" here appears in other passages as "*stubborn*", "*rebellious*", "*revolters*", and "*withdrew*". This malignant response to a benevolent God led God to remove his benevolent protection from Israel, resulting in the Assyrian captivity for the survivors of the ferocious Assyrian horde that descended upon the nation. The image of a "*backsliding heifer*" is that of the animal backing away or withdrawing from a yoke; Israel refused to have the yoke of God on it. There is still a yoke that God intends for his people to bear (Matthew 11:29,30).

The image of a "*backsliding heifer*" in my mind is of a young cow stuck in a mud hole. Imagine trying to pull a muddy, filthy heifer from some bog. Pull or push as one might, the heifer resists every effort to rescue it. Frankly, nothing has changed. Often, God's people are still like the "*backsliding heifer*". It is hard to keep the saved, saved! Push, pull, coax, and coddle, but still wayward members often remain bogged down. If some Christians make it to heaven, it will only be if someone ropes them and drags them in — kicking and screaming.

Two other Hebrew words appear in the Old Testament as "*backsliding*". God said to the prophet Jeremiah, "*Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done?*" (Jeremiah 3:6). Three more times God indicts "*backsliding Israel*" for her crimes (Jeremiah 3:8,11,12). God refers to his apostate people as "*backsliding children*" (Jeremiah 3:14,22) and twice calls his people a "*backsliding daughter*" (Jeremiah 31:22; 49:4). God cites his people for "*perpetual backsliding*" (Jeremiah 8:5).

As anciently, so now, often God's people are "*bent to backsliding from me [God]*" (Hosea 11:7). Happily, though, God will take His backsliding people back to Himself upon repentance. "*I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him*" (Hosea 14:4). What congregation would not be teeming with live bodies were all the backsliding heifers rounded up? Oh, that we were busy seating crowds rather than trying to rope heifers! †

TEXTUAL STUDIES

A Memorial Before God

Harvey Porter

We cherish the record of Cornelius' conversion since he was the first Gentile to become a Christian. Luke recorded this great event for us in Acts chapter 10.

Luke gives us an interesting picture of this Roman even before his conversion. He describes him as *“a devout man who feared God with all his household, (who) gave alms liberally to the people and prayed constantly to God”* (verse 2).

Then, when the angel appeared to him from God, he said, *“Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God”* (verse 4).

This is an interesting statement. It means that he was remembered by God. His prayers and alms were like a memorial, such as a marker, that stood in the presence of God and reminded Him of Cornelius each day. Our Washington Monument reminds us of the Father of our Country; the Lincoln Memorial brings to our minds the greatness of our sixteenth president.

But think of the excellence of a memorial in the presence of God that would cause Him to think of us and bless us each day. The truth is, we have our Lord Jesus in God's presence interceding for us each day. I am, however, focusing our attention on the two things in the life of Cornelius with which God was pleased and liked to remember — prayers and alms.

I have heard many Christians confess that they do not pray daily, and all of us know that one of the great areas of failure among the Lord's people is generous giving to the Lord and His work.

This is amazing! Most of our prayers contain requests for help from God, and yet, He likes to hear that. Jesus gave a parable stating that we should keep coming time and time again to the presence of God with our requests. We all know that we benefit more from prayer than the Father does. Of course, our prayers ought to contain thanksgiving and praise for God, as well as requests. But it should be a



TEXTUAL STUDIES

great comfort and incentive to us that God wants us to talk to Him all of the time. “*Pray without ceasing.*” There is a closeness in prayer, an intimacy that Heaven enjoys. God likes to remember us, our needs, and our gratitude just as we like to remember loved ones and good times we have enjoyed with them. God likes to hear from His children, and He remembers.

The Father also likes to see how His children use what He gives them. He remembered Cornelius for his “alms”. The Greek word is *eleamosuna*, “alms or charitable giving”. It had the idea of showing mercy with the gift. Jesus said of God that He knows how to give good gifts (Matthew 7:11). The Father delights in His children who also know how to give good gifts. This kind of giving stands before the Father like a memorial. **Say, how’s your memorial coming along?** †

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

A Cage Full of Birds

Mark McWhorter

In the time of Jeremiah, the people of Israel had become very wicked. The northern kingdom had been taken away several years before. The southern kingdom, Judah, had not learned by what had happened to the northern kingdom. They had become just as wicked as the northern kingdom had been.

In Jeremiah 5:25-27, we read, “*Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.*”

One way that birds were caught was to lay a trap with a birdcage. Decoys were made of wood or some other material. These decoys looked like real birds. The decoys were put in a birdcage. Then real birds would fly into the cage, thinking that they would be with other birds. Once in the cage, they could not get out.

Evil men in Judah used deceit to lure other men into their homes. The men did not know that they were going to be robbed or enticed to be part of a false business venture. Whatever was done, the evil men were able to take money away from these other men. They were able to become very rich by doing such things.

Do not make your life like a cage full of birds. Always be honest. Always tell the truth. Never steal. Do not be deceitful. Study your Bible. Learn what you should do to obey God. †

BIBLE FIND

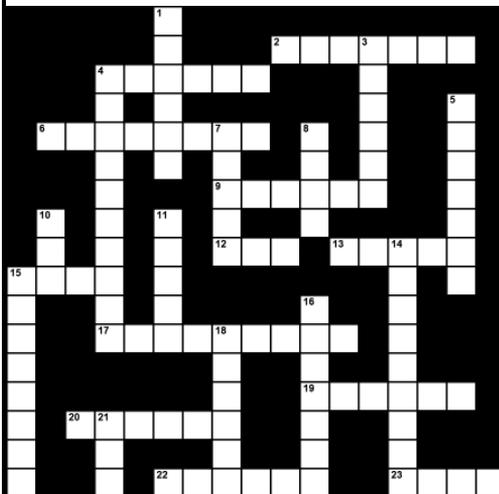
Rachel

Bonnie Rushmore

19. Rachel _____ Leah.
20. Name Rachel's first son.
22. Name Leah's handmaid.
23. Name Rachel's sister.

Down

1. Name Rachel's handmaid.
3. Because Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, God caused Rachel _____ Rachel's womb.
4. Where was Rachel's home.
5. Rachel was _____ her father's sheep.
7. Rachel stole her father's _____.
8. Bilhah gave birth to four _____ in the name of Rachel.



Across

2. Jacob was _____ into marrying Leah.
4. Jacob placed a _____ at Rachel's grave.
6. Rachel died giving birth to _____.
9. Because Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, God _____ Leah's womb.
12. Leah gave birth to _____ sons.
13. Name Rachel's father.
15. Zilpah gave birth to _____ sons in the name of Leah.
17. Rachel wanted the _____ Reuben brought to Leah.

10. How many women did

Jacob marry.

11. At first, Jacob agreed to work for Laban for _____ years to marry Rachel.

14. Rachel was _____.

15. Jacob worked for Laban for _____ years to marry Rachel.

16. Name Rachel's aunt.

18. Which wife did Jacob love the most.

21. Leah gave birth to _____ daughter.

Getting Back to the Basics



Crucial Areas for Successful Marriages

Ken Tyler

Purpose: To help every couple have a successful marriage.

- I. We must live within our income (Romans 13:8).**
 - A. In 90 of 100 divorce cases, the couples were head over heels in debt.
 - 1. The mental strain of such tears down mutual love and concern.

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

2. Don't expect to have the same things other people have worked a lifetime to get.

- B. I want to give you four rules to follow:
1. Take the Lord's off the top (Proverbs 3:9,10).
 2. Save some money.
 3. Take care of your obligations.
 4. Beware of the misuse of credit cards.

II. We must be determined to communicate with one another.

- A. Hugo A. Bordeaux, Executive Director of Marriage Counseling Service in Baltimore said, "All over America, husbands and wives cannot talk to one another; this I am convinced is our number one marriage problem."
- B. Problems become insurmountable when couples will not talk to one another.
- C. We must listen to Paul's words in Ephesians 4:26,27, "*Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; Neither give place to the devil.*"
- D. Someone needs to say, "I'm sorry."

III. We must never consider divorce an option.

- A. This commitment must come from both husband and wife.
- B. It is a sad fact that our society has accepted divorce as a way of life.
- C. God hates divorce and we should have the same attitude (Malachi 2:16).
- D. When divorce is not a consideration, we will begin to look for solutions to our problems.
- E. We need to always remember the words, "Till death us do part" (Romans 7:2).

IV. We must make God the Head of our home (Luke 1:6).

- A. Husbands and wives who pray together – stay together (Colossians 4:2).
- B. Husbands and wives who attend worship faithfully together – stay together (Acts 2:42).
- C. Husbands and wives who read their Bibles together – stay together (Acts 17:11).
- D. Husbands and wives who work for the Lord together – stay together (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Conclusion: It takes commitment and dedication to have the right kind of marriage. Do you want a successful marriage? †

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

Standing on the Promises of God

Tom McLemore

Standing on the promises of God...

I. I am standing on exceeding great promises (2 Peter 1:4).

- A. Greater than what man could make or much less keep.
- B. The GREATEST promises for they involve man's greatest needs:
 1. Salvation from past sins (Acts 2:38).
 2. Forgiveness of present sins (1 John 1:7-9).
 3. Peace with God (Romans 5:1) and with ourselves.
 4. Eternal salvation (Mark 10:29,30; John 3:16).

II. I am standing on precious promises (2 Peter 1:4).

- A. More valuable than the whole world (Matthew 16:26).
- B. MOST precious because of what it cost Jesus to make them possible (1 Peter 1:18,19).
- C. Precious to Christians because on them rests every ounce of hope that we have for the hereafter (Titus 1:2).

III. I am standing on the promises that cannot fail.

- A. Made by Him Who cannot lie and Him whose counsel is immutable (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:17).
- B. Made by Him who has divine power, glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3,4).
- C. Made by Him who has the only perfect record for keeping promises.

IV. I cannot fall.

- A. Because I'm "listening every moment to the Spirit's call... resting in my Savior as my all in all."
- B. Because I'm a partaker of the divine nature by means of the promises of God (2 Peter 1:4).
 1. Man was made in the image of God, but was lost in the fall; by the promises of God, his hope is restored.
 2. A recipient of the promises of God "*has escaped the corruption of the world*" (2 Peter 1:4; James 1:27; 1 John 2:15,16; Romans 12:2).
- C. Because I'm adding to my faith with INCREASE (2 Peter 1:5-7).
- D. Because I'm useful and fruitful in the service of God (2 Peter 1:8).

Only by standing on the promises of God can I have the abundant entrance into heaven (2 Peter 1:11). Won't you obey Him and stand with us on the promises of God? †

Tom McLemore has preached for many years in the southern states of the USA.



King Hezekiah took the throne of Judah at the age of 25 (2 Kings 18:2). He was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. He knew that God hated the worship of idols, so he pulled down altars and destroyed places of idol worship (verse 4).

Then the good king rebuilt the temple, long neglected by God's people. He cleansed the temple of God (2 Chronicles 29:16-19). During his reign, the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria.

Hezekiah realized that his country was also threatened. He rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and fortified them (2 Chronicles 32:5). He cut a rock tunnel to ensure the city's water supply, in the event of battle (2 Chronicles 32:30). Soon after this, Hezekiah became sick unto death. His good friend, the prophet Isaiah, told him that he soon would die. At this pronouncement, the king turned his face to the wall and wept (2 Kings 20:2,3).

However, he did not simply wring his hands and cry, "Poor little me!" He prayed, reminding God that he had tried to do right all of his life. God heard the prayer, and relented of His former plan to end the king's life.

He told Isaiah to relay the message that he had heard his prayer and had seen his tears...and that he would add 15 years to his life (verse 6). Wanting to be sure that God had indeed given him this blessing, he asked for a sign.

Then, God made the shadow of the sundial move backward ten degrees (2 Kings 20:11). Hezekiah lived those 15 years, and during all of that time, invaders did not capture Jerusalem. When he died at the end of the allotted time, all of Israel honored him. He was the man for whom the Lord turned time backward. †

Betty Tucker was a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International* prior to her death in 2008.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

“Where Never Is Heard...”

Dalton Key

One of the more interesting and inspirational characters of the New Testament was a man named Joseph.

You probably know him better by his other name, the one he was given by the apostles: “*Joseph...was surnamed by the apostles, Barnabas (which means, son of Encouragement)*” (Acts 4:36 RSV).

Joseph did a good job of living up to his new name. Not long after Paul’s conversion, when Paul was yet known as Saul, a man much feared and mistrusted by the disciples, it was Barnabas who stood by Saul’s side, encouraging his acceptance as a fellow believer (Acts 9:26,27).

And sometime later, Barnabas did for a young man named John Mark what he had earlier done for Paul. On their first missionary journey, Barnabas and Paul took John Mark with them, only to see him turn back and return home shortly after the journey began. When the time came for Barnabas and Paul to make plans for a second mission trip, Barnabas insisted, even against Paul’s

strong objections, that John Mark be given another opportunity (Acts 15:39,40).

Yes, Barnabas was the perfect name for Joseph. He was a perennial encourager, someone who sought out, found, and reinforced the best in those around him. He used his words wisely, as tools for helping, for building up.

And in so doing, this “Son of Encouragement” was busy living what the Scriptures require of all of us: “*Let no corrupt communications proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*” (Ephesians 4:29). “*But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*” (Hebrews 3:13).

Do you wish to be a benefit both to the Lord and those you know? Be a Barnabas! Be an encourager! †

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

Who Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

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. I share my name with two other men in the Old Testament.
2. One of those men is mentioned as a Levite serving in the House of God; the other was killed by the Philistines when the Ark of the Covenant was taken.
3. In my youth I used a javelin to kill a man and his female companion in a tent before the congregation of Israel.
4. My actions turned away God's wrath from Israel and atoned for Israel's idolatry with Baal-Peor.
5. God granted me a covenant of peace and an everlasting priesthood.
6. Moses sent me to war against Midian with the holy instruments and the trumpets.
7. I led a group to confront the tribes on the east side of the Jordan concerning an altar.
8. I asked God if Israel should continue to war against Benjamin.
9. My grandfather was Aaron.
10. My father, Eleazar, was buried on my land in Mount Ephraim.



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Can a Child of God Fall From Grace?

Dale Grissom

There are many in the religious world who believe and teach that once a person is saved, there is nothing he can do that will cause him to be lost. Consider, however, the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:4: *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”*. Here Paul told the church in Galatia that if they tried to live under the law of Moses, they would fall from grace. The old Law had been fulfilled and had been taken out of the way, having been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

Many today fail to rightly divide the Word of God, continuing to try to live under part of the Old Law. We must realize that the Old Law is good to study and that it will help us to understand the New Testament, but the Old Law is no longer in effect. We must live under the Law of Christ, the New Testament.

Those who believe they cannot fall from grace are deceiving themselves, and this is a dangerous way to live. We must spend each day living according to the Word of God, always praying to God and seeking His forgiveness. The following Scriptures bear this out: *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12); and *“...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Even Paul was concerned personally about falling from grace: *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away”* (1 Corinthians 9:27). We must always be alert so that sin will not slip in and take over in our lives.

In 2 Peter 2:21,22 we see that we can fall from grace after we have known the way of righteousness: *“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb; the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire”*. Those who truly study the Word of God with understanding cannot help but realize that it is possible to fall from grace, and that those who do not repent of sin in their lives will be lost. †

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

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Is Jesus Really Reigning Now?

Ardron Hinton

Many think of the kingdom of Christ as something either entirely in the future or at least mainly future. Are there reasons for believing that the kingdom Christ intended to set up exists now? Clearly, He expected to begin His reign over His kingdom in the lifetime of the apostles. Note Matthew 10:7, “*And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’*” Also Matthew 16:19, where He promised these apostles “*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*”. Did He succeed with this plan? We wish to notice in this lesson two points of evidence (among many) that His kingdom actually began in the lifetime of the apostles just as He intended.

In Luke 22:16 Jesus said the Passover (the Jewish holy day they were observing) would be “*fulfilled in the kingdom of God*”. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul writes, “*For Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us*”. He makes Christ Himself the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover (Exodus 12:21-23 and Deuteronomy 16:2), and states it as already done. Returning to Luke 22, we see Jesus giving a memorial to His death as our “Passover lamb”. This is the Lord’s Supper or communion. Since it was to be kept during this age (1 Corinthians 11:26), we can reach no other conclusion but that the kingdom must be in existence during this time. Jesus replaced the Passover lambs and gave His followers a memorial of the event, and Paul said this memorial was to be observed “*till He comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26). He reigns over His kingdom before His return, not after it, so He must be reigning now. (Read Matthew 28:18 and Acts 2:29-36 again in this connection.)

In 1 Corinthians 15:23-26 Paul adds to this by saying that Christ “*must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet*”. The last “*enemy*” to be destroyed is death, and this happens with the resurrection of His people, as Paul goes on to explain. But notice that Paul connects this defeat of the last enemy with “*His coming*”. This is the same point in time as the ending time for the Lord’s Supper observance. It is the present age. Christ reigns now.

In Luke 19:12-27 Jesus taught a parable about a “*nobleman*” going to a “*far country*” to “*receive for himself a kingdom*”. This also fits the prophecy of Daniel 7:12,14 that He would go to “*the Ancient of Days*” (God the Father) and be given “*dominion and glory and a kingdom*”. This was to be a kingdom that “*shall not pass away*” and in which “*all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him*”. He is not returning to begin His reign, but to reward those who have accepted it and punish those who have refused His reign (Luke 19:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-

BIBLE QUESTIONS

10; Philippians 2:9-11). In John 14:1-3 Jesus promised to come back and take His people (His “*bride*” – 2 Corinthians 11:2) to His Father’s house. But consider this: Jesus said His reign was “*within*” His people. Several verses we have noticed make it clear that His authority can be rejected now. So this raises a very important question: Is He really reigning in MY life? In Luke 18:17 Jesus said, “*Assuredly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it*”. With the trusting loyalty of a child, I must WANT Jesus to be my King. To be among the rewarded, I must choose to bow before Him now.

According to prophecy (Isaiah 9:6,7) and according to a plain statement in Matthew 2:2, Jesus was born to be King. He came into the world as He did with that purpose, among others. But at His birth there were few who acknowledged this great fact (Luke 2:8-18; Matthew 2:1-12). As His death approached, some even mocked His claim that He was a King (John 19:1-3). Those who accept Him must be prepared to accept Him as who He really is, “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Timothy 6:16). The real citizens of His kingdom, however, are not those who simply call Him their Ruler, but those who actually allow Him to rule their lives (Matthew 7:21). †

Ardron Hinton is a preacher of the Gospel living in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.

Answering Before One Knows the Question

Ernest S. Underwood

Do you know someone who knows all the answers even before he or she knows the question? If so, you are not alone. Solomon evidently knew some. His comment about them can be found in Proverbs 18:13. He said, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.” One area where this kind of person can be found is religion. These folks know how one is saved without bothering to read and learn what God has said on the matter. They “feel it in their heart,” or some pastor or reverend has told them to “just ask Jesus to come into your heart right now,” and they know the answer without examining the matter. Such, according to Solomon, act foolishly and shamefully. Men worship the way that “makes them feel good,” without any regard to what God has said pleases Him. Some know the answer about God’s attitude about homosexuality without hearing God on the matter. You should read some of the “hate mail” I get on this when I show what the Bible says. Surely, this is a terrible and dark shame on a religion or a nation who so thinks and acts. God calls it foolishness, foolishness that damns the soul, and all of the laws and wicked decisions of men do not change or make void God’s law. Where do you stand in such matters? Do you know the answer before hearing God in His Word? †

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Last Days

Mike Benson

Question: “Are we living in the last days?”

Answer: Yes. Carefully study the following thoughts and passages:

1. The Old Testament prophets said, “*the mountain of the Lord’s house*” (i.e., the church) would be “*established*” (i.e., built) in the LAST DAYS. “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it*” (Isaiah 2:2). “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it*” (Micah 4:1)

2. The church Jesus promised (cf. Matthew 16:18,19) was established on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of the Lord (cf. Acts 2:47); thus, the LAST DAYS (i.e., the Christian age) began in Acts 2, in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise. In fact, Peter told his audience that what was happening on that very occasion in Acts 2 was in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy which was to come to pass in the LAST DAYS. Compare Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:16,17. Hence, the LAST DAYS began on Pentecost.

3. Thus, we are now living in the LAST DAYS, and we have been living in them for nearly 2,000 years. The New Testament says, “*God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these LAST DAYS spoken to us by His Son...*” (Hebrews 1:1,2a) Here the inspired writer makes it clear that the LAST DAYS were currently in effect. If the last days were already in effect at that time, then we must conclude that they continue today.

Review:

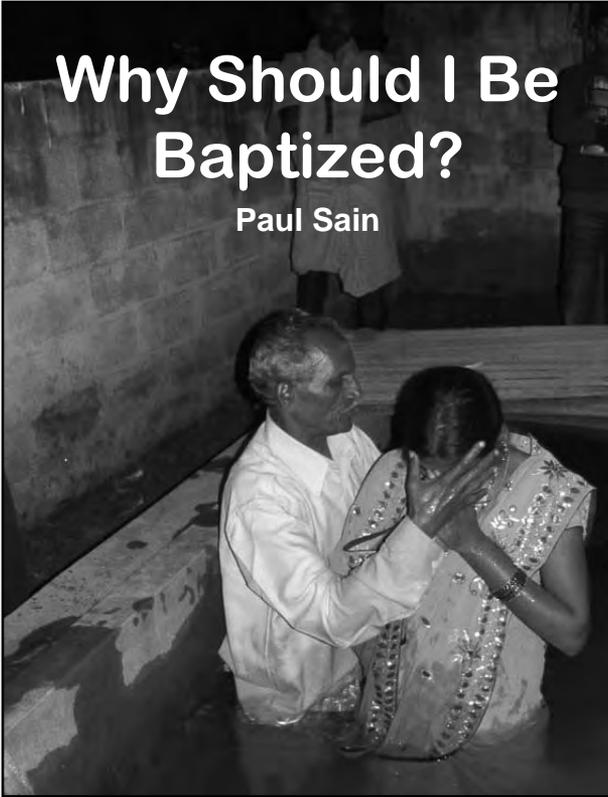
- The church was to begin in the LAST DAYS (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1).
- The church was established on Pentecost; hence the LAST DAYS (i.e., the Christian age) began on that occasion (Acts 2:17ff).
- Thus, the LAST DAYS continue to today and will not cease until Christ returns (Hebrews 1:1,2; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26). †

Mike Benson is a Gospel preacher living in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Why Should I Be Baptized?

Paul Sain



When I can read in the New Testament and hear Jesus Christ state clearly that the ones who believe and are baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16) — then it is important! The words of Simon Peter (an inspired apostle) state that we must “*repent and be baptized*” in order to receive the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38), then I know I should be baptized! To hear the simple but powerful words of Simon Peter (1 Peter 3:21) stating that “*baptism doth also now save us,*” this means I must be baptized to be saved. To reflect on the

conversion of Saul, and hear the instruction he received to “*arise and be baptized*” in order to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16), it becomes even more clear that baptism brings about the forgiveness of my sins.

Another way of saying basically the same thing — I know ALL must be baptized to be saved because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, commanded us to be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). Cornelius was commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:48). Those on the day of Pentecost were told to be baptized to have their sins remitted (Acts 2:38). IF we want to be saved, go to heaven forever, we must likewise be baptized! †

Paul Sain preaches for the East Hill Church of Christ in Pulaski, Tennessee, USA.



WE'RE LOOKING FOR GIDEON AND HIS 300!

Yes, we're looking for a strong, biblically-sound, and passionate man (and wife) to take the lead in a much-needed work in the Lord's church. We're calling him "Gideon".

And we're looking for his 300 warriors who will work with him, and with God, to turn things around in the church.

What is the reason for this search? (the World Evangelism Team)

Have you noticed how many of our young people leave the Lord soon after leaving home? The statistics are high. Many factors feed into the problem. One is the small amount of time that many parents spend with their children, because both the father and the mother are working outside the home. Another problem is that too few parents have daily Bible study with their children, with the result that what should be a "Christian family" is actually a "morally good secular family", except that they may attend worship on Sunday.

A third problem is that much of the literature used for the past three decades or so in our Bible classes has been written by denominational people for interdenominational use. Obviously, the lessons must be presented as morals, values, principles, and Bible history. Definitive doctrine cannot be covered because that would limit the use of the

FROM THE HEART OF...

materials. And the result is that many of the younger generations have never been taught clearly about the church, or obedience to the Gospel, or acceptable worship, or our purpose in this world. When they “leave” it is not that they are turning their backs on the truth; *there has been no conviction concerning truth.*

Admittedly, too many men who fill our pulpits these days have adopted the attitude reported by Dalton Key in a recent article in this magazine. He wrote that some years ago an older preacher had told him that he was not preaching “doctrine” any more, because it was only divisive. And brother Key commented, “After years of this soft preaching, we are experiencing an apostasy.”

So, if neither many of the parents, nor some preachers, nor much of our class materials are covering definitive doctrine, it is not surprising that there are people who regularly attend our worship services who do not know the difference between the church of Christ and the denominational world. Some now question the necessity of baptism. Some see no problem with adding instruments of music to worship. Some think of the New Testament as a book of ideals rather than laws laid down by God. In this age of “I’m OK, you’re OK” and “Don’t be judgmental”, many in the church have accepted “tolerance” and “compromise” to the point that the authority of the Scriptures has been rendered meaningless.

When the older generations that were reputed to really know the Scriptures are gone, what kind of apostasy will take place in the American church? What will be the reality twenty years down the road?

How can we bring the church back to the point of real conviction and motivation? How can a large enough percentage of Christians be re-taught so that things can be turned around? Can it be done through our Gospel papers? No, because too few Christians take those papers and read them. Can it be done through our pulpits? Not entirely, because not enough preachers are on fire with the subject and others are part of the problem. Can we depend on the Christian colleges? No, because a growing number of them are contributing to the apostasy.

So, how can the greater portion of the church be reached? The one answer seems to be developing literature that will have the opposite effect of the materials now being used: **a new line of classroom studies, that will look so good and will be so good and will offer so many options that it will be a welcomed teaching tool throughout the brotherhood.**

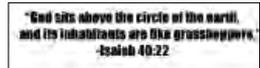
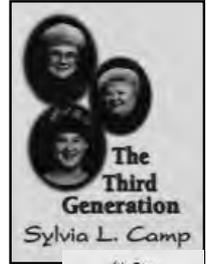
Yes, we must prepare ourselves and our children with *knowledge of God’s word*, and with the experience of a *living* relationship with Him, so that if this growing trend of opposition to Christianity continues to escalate, we – and our children – will be able to stand.

FROM THE HEART OF...

What Do We Propose?

Component Parts

- ★ **Class books** – perfect-bound, full-color books for the child to keep in his permanent library.
- ★ **Teacher's manual and visuals** for the room, with training DVDs.
- ★ **LifeSpan** weekly paper for take-home.
- ★ **Book of Bible Knowledge** – compilation of visuals for each lesson of each quarter, bound into book form, for the child's permanent library, for review throughout childhood.
- ★ **Flash cards** for memory work – picturized for younger children, photo from lesson with verse on back for older children.
- ★ **Memory verses set to music**, with accompanying CDs.
- ★ **Time Lines** (4 levels, for Wednesday evening studies) showing biblical events, corresponding secular events in that time in the world; secular events with providential overruling, changing the course of history.
- ★ **Parenting class materials** for Sunday classes and for family devotionals.
- ★ **Daily Devotional material** – drills/review materials.
- ★ **Song books and CDs** – Adult, teen, juvenile.
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- ★ **Materials for small-group meetings**, dealing especially with evangelism and other lessons in outreach and teaching.
- ★ **Bible Character dolls and sets** for 3-D lessons.
- ★ **Hands-on objects** for cradle roll classes.
- ★ **DVDs** to teach cradle roll teachers.



Our World A Little Man with Gears?



Laura was helping her mother with the dishes after lunch. "You're being kinder, Momma, sometimes." "Oh, I don't know," Laura answered, hesitantly. "Something that was said in our Bible class this morning. I guess." "Laura, explain a picture!" "You know about if I draw in a blue circle in red ink, and I have a picture?" "Or is it just the blue circle around the red ink, and the red ink inside the blue circle?" "Or is it a red 'X' over people who are talking in the church?" "What do you think?" Mother smiled at her daughter. "Maybe an 'X' would be enough about how you can be really nice about the Bible teaching, much about Laura?" "Oh, yes! I'm really nice about the Bible teaching, much about Laura. You know what God says about him. You know what God says about him."

we can be thankful that we have been able to understand.
"Can he just take over our minds — you know, like they say some people are possessed by the devil?"
"That's a good question," Mother smiled. "And all you know there's only one place where we can find the true answers about God and about Satan" — in God's word!
"I can see how Satan works with our eyes!"
"Oh, God makes us see things that are called 'Satan'! Good creation of things, and all that the created was good. He did not cause Satan to choose to be wrong. Satan made his choice to be bad, and because he rebelled against God, he was thrown out of heaven — Revelation 12:7-12."

FROM THE HEART OF...

★ **Video games** for:

Memorization of verses
Learning Bible facts
Paul's journeys
Bible timeline

★ **“Into God’s World” Internet website** for publishing the materials (printed and DVDs) worldwide.

★ **Development of materials for churches overseas.**

We must permeate the lessons with these “Threads of Truth”:

Show God’s eternal purposes, His interaction with man. Stress the spiritual relationship with God, not just a form or a Sunday exercise with the rest of life being as secular as the lives of those around us who are not Christians.

Stress how God has dealt with man (through miracles, providence; how prayers are prayed; how prayers are answered). Be sure that “providence” is fully explained and understood, so that God’s work in this present time is not doubted. Miracles were God’s tool to authenticate a new message or messenger; providence is working within the laws of nature, using whatever tool He needs, to accomplish His goal; most of His work through the ages has been providential.

Show Christ as our Saviour, our Lord, our Brother; salvation is not the result of a person’s goodness or sacrifices but because the Christian has obediently washed himself in the blood of Christ in baptism.

Deal with the reality of God’s purposes through us; therefore our reason for being in the world.

Teach the oneness of God’s family and the fact that the relationship is a personal one, not dependent on any other person’s faithfulness.

Explore and emphasize personal commitment and involvement.

Stress the necessity of evangelism and outreach by teaching and practicing.

Look for opportunities to make these emphases in every Bible lesson, thereby creating a new perspective for viewing the familiar Scriptures.

Permeate all of the lessons with our five “P”s:

- * **Purity of life**
- * **Purpose in this world**
- * **Prayer**
- * **Providence**
- * **Passion for God**

FROM THE HEART OF...

Our children must be taught from the cradle that they are special people — *in* the world, but not *of* the world. In today's culture, sadly, statistics show that immodest dress, immorality, broken homes, and the gamut of the world's sinful practices is almost as high in the church as in the population that does not claim to be Christian. **How can we malign the Lord's name in this way???** We must separate our children from those influences, building a barrier against them by teaching from the earliest ages that we belong to God, that we must live pure lives (setting the standard for their friends, rather than the other way around), that we are in this world to carry out God's great purpose in our lives. Our children must learn, by our words and our lives, that prayer is a vital part of their existence, that God still works mightily through His providential overruling in response to our prayers, needs, and purposes. And we must set aflame, in the heart of every Christian, the passion for God that would enable him to choose God, even in the face of persecution and death.

Each lesson will have a definite purpose, a named goal in teaching, keeping always in mind the Gospel of Christ, its practice, and its propagation throughout the world in this generation. From the first level to the last level, we must instill the goal of being the first generation since the first century to evangelize the world, beginning with feeling responsible for the people in one's own community and family. This is the treasure God has prepared from before the foundation of the world — the treasure He has committed to our care.

The lessons we plan will be neither "conservative" nor "liberal" nor "legalistic" but, rather, biblical. They must be balanced, not a reaction to anything. If the Bible doesn't provide the authority for a belief or practice, we won't teach it. If it is a biblical doctrine, we have the obligation to incorporate it into the spectrum. But the doctrine must be taught with understanding and explanation of why God asks this and what He is accomplishing by it.

With the moral and spiritual warfare Satan is waging against us, we can't hope to win unless we are willing to take a strong, decisive stand for the truth. In today's secular schools, children as young as kindergarten age are being taught that the homosexual lifestyle is all right. Those religious groups that hold on to their people begin at the earliest ages, teaching strongly definitive doctrine, thoroughly indoctrinating those young minds. We must be as wise as they; we must instill in our children the directives of God's Word from the earliest ages, before they are old enough to have to make decisions about a lifestyle or a marriage mate or parenting. If we wait until they are faced with those forks in the road, we will lose because their peers and the world will have already turned them to their way of thinking. Permeating the materials must be, not only definitive doctrinal truths,

FROM THE HEART OF...

but also the moral and social applications that are the natural result of godliness. We also need to teach overviews of the Bible in chronological lessons.

“Into God’s World” Catalog

It is our intention to print a catalog, offering all of our materials at the lowest possible cost, and also contact information and coverage of other brotherhood tools, such as DVDs and studies developed by Focus Press, Apologetics Press, World Video Bible School, Christian Courier, House to House, Lads to Leaders, World Bible School, Gospel Broadcasting Network, Search for the Lord’s Way, DVDs and other materials offered by sound Christians, so that the catalog will serve as a resource information center for all that is available in the church for use.

The class books, with colored illustrations (no cartoon art work), can be printed in China for about 1/4 what it would cost to print them here. What the nation of China can do to help the church will be worth far more to us than our little amount of money will be worth to their economy, so we should take advantage of whatever can be done there. In addition, a number of Christians currently work in China, and through them we should be able to locate the best factories for economical development of the visuals and crafts that will be needed. CDs and DVDs can also be produced very economically, enabling us to use these tools in a great way — and then everything can be put on the “Into God’s World” website! What an age we live in! God has supplied every needed tool to enable His people to fully evangelize the world in our generation. What a difference that will make!

We must not be lulled by doing “good” “busy work”, such as good gestures to nursing home folks, hospitals, etc., using all of our time getting ready to teach, but never teaching. Launch into really becoming involved with teaching and with guiding people to find Bible answers to their needs. A confronting, reproducing Christianity is the only kind that lives and brings happiness.

We must dig ourselves up out of this deadly rut of form and complacency. Christianity was never intended to be the religion for lazy or half-converted people. If those things are the measure of our commitment to God, we are in the wrong place.

Heaven is described as a place of rest from our labors. That doesn’t mean our never-ceasing effort to acquire more of this world’s goods. The inference is that only those who have labors to rest from will go there. †

Christians experienced in writing, teaching, artwork, layout work, editing, proofreading, etc. who would like to volunteer to help develop these materials are urged to contact us at 662-283-1192 or Choate@WorldEvangelism.org. COME ON BOARD, GIDEON!!!

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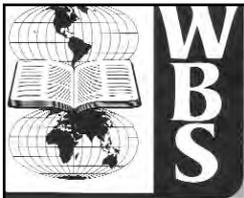
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- * For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity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

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 29)

1. No. Calling upon God is something we do after belief.
2. No. We are required to hear the Word of God.
3. Isaiah 52:7.
4. The message is so good that even the most unattractive part of man becomes beautiful.
5. Yes.
6. Hearing the Word of God.
7. Yes. Psalm 19:4
8. It was a willful ignorance.
9. Provoke Israel to jealousy.
10. Isaiah 65:1-2.
11. It is not waiting for people to come to us, but actively seeking them where they are.
12. Gesture of invitation.
13. God is continually offering salvation to any who come to Him, even Israel who had rejected Him.
14. They were disobedient and stubborn.
15. Due to their own stubbornness, they willfully rejected the knowledge of God to which they had access.

Who Am I? (page 97)

Answer: Phinehas (Numbers 25; Numbers 31:6-7; Joshua 22; Joshua 24:33; Ezra 8:33)

Bible Find (page 91)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

