

VOLUME SEVENTY-SIX

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



J.C. and Betty Choate



Byron and Gay Nichols



Louis and Bonnie Rushmore



Jerry and Paula Bates

**CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SHARING
THE GOSPEL**

Measuring a Man

Betty Burton Choate

It surely must be
That men who begin to feel big,
Men who would challenge God
Or defy God
Or say there is no God
Have never measured themselves by a mountain:
God's little raised embroidery work,
Decorating small portions
Of this small earth
In this minor galaxy
in the bigness of space
He formed
With a word.



The Real Plan of Salvation

- The briefest summary of the divine plan of salvation sounded forth from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself in Mark 16:16, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved...”*** (NKJV). Nothing is simpler, and more importantly, no human substitute (Matthew 7:21-23) will permit one to bypass the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) to make entry through the pearly gates of heaven to walk its golden streets (Revelation 21:21).



- One cannot negotiate salvation with Deity, not here on earth, and certainly not in eternity. Saying, “Wait, Lord! You don’t understand! We voted on that and...” in Final Judgment will avail nothing. To avoid the eternal misery associated with making a poor salvation choice, **listen to the words of Jesus.**

The Real Church

- The basic definition of the compound Greek word (*ekklesia*) lying behind the English word “church” is “a calling out” (Strong). *Ekklesia* was used for hundreds of years prior to the first century “to refer to an assembly of persons” (Louw and Nida). The New Testament uses the word *ekklesia* 114 times throughout its epistles. Obviously then, the **context** in which *ekklesia* appears determines the **type** of an assembly under consideration (e.g., non-religious, Jewish, Christian). For instance, Acts 19:32, 39 and 41 employ *ekklesia* to refer to non-religious ‘assemblies.’ Acts 7:38 uses *ekklesia* to refer to the Israelites during the exodus from Egypt.
- In addition, the word “church” is used in the New Testament in three different ways to refer to assemblies of Christians. Jesus Christ used the word “church” to refer to the universal nature of the one, true church He promised to establish (Matthew 16:18), which spans locations and generations – across the world and from the time of its beginning until the Second Coming of Christ. (Not to be overlooked, **the real church belongs to Jesus Christ!**) The word “church” in other contexts refers to the local assembly of Christians in a particular geographic area, such as at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2). Finally, the word “church” in the context of 1 Corinthians 14 refers to the particular worship assembly of a local church (14:4-5, 12, 19, 28, 33-35); the apostle Paul also used “church” in that chapter to refer to the local church (14:23).
- No biblical reference uses the word “church” to refer to a building or place. “Church” in the Bible always refers to people assembling rather than to the place where they gathered. That is the same meaning of *ekklesia* when referring to any type of an assembly (e.g., non-religious or religious). The church is always an assembly of people (i.e., universally, geographically or a particular assembly occasion). **“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”** (1 Peter 4:11 NKJV).

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THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

STAFF:

Editor: Byron Nichols
Associate Editors: Jerry Bates
Louis Rushmore
Layout Editors: Betty Burton Choate
Bonnie Rushmore
Typesetting: Gay Nichols
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate

SPANISH EDITION:

Managing Editor: Rafael Barrantes

TELUGU EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translator:
Joshua Gootam

TAMIL EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translators:
Benny Martin, S. Rajanayagam

ENGLISH EDITION IN INDIA AND BRAILLE EDITION:

Managing Editors, Philemon Rajah
and Kingsly Rajah

HINDI EDITION

Managing Editor, Earnest Gill

NEPALI EDITION

Managing Editor, Pramod Dhakal

PAITE EDITION

Managing Editor, Thang Lien

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Jack Harriman	R.H. Tex Williams

Cost: \$4.00 for single issues; \$12.00 for four issues; \$20.00 for eight issues. Please make checks payable to World Evangelism Foundation, and mail to Byron Nichols, (Editor) P.O. Box 11218, Springfield, MO 65808; Telephone: 417-823-4918; Email: byron.nichols@att.net.

Please send articles for publication and changes of address to Byron Nichols in Springfield, with both old and new addresses, so that our records can be corrected.

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL is published by churches of Christ as a non-profit effort. Write to us at World Evangelism, P.O. Box 72, Winona, Mississippi, 38967, USA. Phone: 662-283-1192; Email address: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org.

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



J.C. Choate believed in and showed very clearly the tremendous value of the printed page in teaching others about the Lord.

The birth of *The Voice of Truth International* 20 years ago has proved to be a landmark event. This quarterly magazine continues to be a blessing to more people than any of us can calculate. We continue to do our best to merit the confidence of our brethren in Christ.

In thinking about the endless blessings that have come about as a result of the existence of this magazine, I very quickly came up with this list of people who have been a part of **20 years of blessings** as a

result of *The Voice of Truth International*:

20 YEARS OF BLESSINGS

Byron Nichols

- those of us involved directly with the magazine
- those supporters and their joy in having a vital part
- those receiving the magazine
- those who have become Christians with the aid of this spiritual material
- those whose Christian faith and service have grown from this
- those who have had the joy of sharing the magazine with others
- those who share in just knowing that this publication exists

We want to sincerely thank every person and every congregation that has contributed in any way to these **20 years of blessings**.

Knowing that most of our readers did not have access to the magazine at the beginning 20 years ago, I thought that there might well be some interest in being able to read the two editorials that appeared in that inaugural issue. They have been reproduced in the pages that follow. †



Introducing The Voice of Truth International

J.C. Choate

In 1962 my family and I went to Karachi, Pakistan to serve as missionaries. While there we became familiar with *The Voice of America*, listening to that short-wave program for news from our country and also for news that was happening throughout the world. It occurred to me that while that was a voice for America, why shouldn't there be a voice for Truth? We then began a monthly magazine, and – you guessed it – we called it *The Voice of Truth*.

Later, we began to broadcast the Gospel over Radio Sri Lanka in English and other languages, to serve India and also for several other countries in Asia and Africa. Most of the programs were given the name *The Voice of Truth*. We also began some magazines in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and in Singapore. Again, several of them continue to be published under the heading *The Voice of Truth*.

As the years have gone by and we have seen, increasingly, the need for good Christian magazines both at home and abroad, we have decided to print a new magazine in the United States. Again, we have turned to the name *The Voice of Truth*, but since this one will be more international than the others, it will be known as *The Voice of Truth International*.

Our purpose for *The Voice of Truth International* is several-fold. First, we want to bring out a magazine of around 100 pages which will be filled with basic truths of the Bible. There will be no paid advertising to take up the space. While we may see fit to deal from time to time with various false teachings, our purpose will not be to publicly attack personalities, to give them and their opinions publicity, and to make martyrs of them. Rather, we prefer to teach God's

will in such a way that when you pass the magazine on to a friend, you can do so with the full assurance that he or she will be taught the truth without the need of any apology. In other words, we will not use the magazine as a forum for debate and controversy. That is not to say that there is no need for such magazines, but this will not be one of them.

...The Voice of America... It occurred to me that while that was a voice for America, why shouldn't there be a voice for Truth?

Second, we believe that this magazine is needed here in the States, and it will be distributed here as widely as possible, as it goes on sale, issue by issue, and by yearly subscription. *The Voice of Truth International* will be unique in its make-up, not a duplication of other publications.

Third, we hope to use this magazine as a feeder for our English magazines in other parts of the world. That is, the articles will be laid out in such a way that they can be offset directly, along with local articles and editorials. Using this method, the articles will already be typeset, proof-read, and ready to go. The content will also be carefully selected, according to the need in the countries where it is published. You might ask, "Then why not just send a supply of this magazine to those different countries?" If that were done, there would be the problem of shipping and probable duty on bulk quantities. Then, whether mailed from here or from there, individually, they would carry the U.S.A. address and indication as having been printed in America. We feel that such literature makes a far better impression for good if it is printed in the individual countries where it is being used. Also, in this way, local editorials and articles can address specific needs.

Fourth, we will make this magazine available to World Bible School teachers to send to their English-speaking students throughout the world. They can use it as supplementary and follow-up materials in their efforts to win their students to Christ.

Initially, we hope to print *The Voice of Truth International* at least on a quarterly basis, and then move up to a monthly publication. By not dating the magazine it will be relevant over a long period of time, but we will number the issues so that the ones who receive them can keep up with them and order them according to the issue number they need.

I will serve as Editor-in-Chief, and brother Byron Nichols, a faithful preacher of the Gospel and one of the elders of the North National Church of Christ in Springfield, Missouri, is the Managing Editor. We will have a staff of writers who

will make available to us articles on a regular basis to appear in its pages. Other writers will be added, as well as other staff positions, in time. We will welcome your comments and suggestions and your help with the circulation of this magazine.

We have dreamed about this magazine for a long time. It is now a dream come true, and the Lord willing, it will continue as a pillar and support for the Truth. We hope you will want to be a part of it, that you will help with the writing, that you will contribute monetarily so we can send it to those who cannot afford it. We would like to use it as a tool for **world evangelism**, to supply it to local libraries, doctors' offices, and reading rooms in general. Would you sponsor it in one or more of these places?

This magazine will be printed and circulated on a non-profit basis. It will not be political and will not cater to the whims and wishes of any man. *We believe there is one true and living God, the creator of man and woman and all things, that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, born of the virgin Mary, that He lived without sin, performed miracles, died on the cross to save man from sin, was buried and resurrected, and returned to the Father in Heaven to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that He will come one day to take His people to heaven to live there forevermore. We believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and completely furnishes us unto every good work, that Christ built His church, that He is the Saviour of it, head of it, that He adds only the saved to it, and that one must be a faithful member of it to go to heaven. Concerning worship, the Christian life, marriage, moral purity, heaven and hell, and all other things that God would have us to do and to abstain from, we believe that these precepts are clearly stated in the Bible and that one day at the Judgment we will have to answer to God for all that we have done, or not done, based on the teaching of God's Holy Word.*

With the foregoing introduction in mind, we present to you ***The Voice of Truth International***. May it be used to help teach God's Word – the Truth – to every nation, to every ethnic group, and to every person in all of the earth. This is our purpose for our writing, our publishing, and our lives. In everything, may God's will be done to the salvation of souls and to His glory forevermore. †

*Twenty years of history have shown us
the tremendous value of
The Voice of Truth International,
in sharing the Gospel among believers and
unbelievers in many nations of the world.*

From the Managing Editor

Byron Nichols

As we begin this new magazine, perhaps my most solemn thoughts have to do with the great responsibility that accompanies the selection of the title for the publication – *The Voice of Truth International*. What a serious undertaking it is to attempt to dispense the truth on any subject, but to try to do that with regard to **God’s inspired Word, the Bible** – that is indeed a solemn endeavor! Add to that the idea of trying to do this on an international or worldwide basis, and you can see that this is not something to be taken lightly.

Someone has said, “A drop of ink may make a million think.” What more could we ask? It is our earnest intent to cause many to think – to think about God, Jesus Christ, heaven, hell, and eternity.

Each issue of *The Voice of Truth International* will be unashamedly evangelistic. All who are associated with this magazine are concerned about helping folks to be saved eternally. We share the same burden that the apostle Paul talked about in Romans 1: 14,15. There he stated the responsibility that he felt in sharing the Gospel with **all people**. In the next verse he explained why he was so concerned about sharing the Gospel with them: “...it is the power of God unto salvation...” He makes it apparent that without the Gospel there will be no salvation.

The need for this new magazine is tremendous. Without exception, every worker involved in world evangelism that we have had opportunity to discuss this with has wholeheartedly agreed that there is an enormous need. Not only is the need great, but the opportunities that now exist are also great. It appears that there are more people exhibiting an interest in God and the Bible than ever before. We just **must not** let these opportunities pass by. We **must** share with these millions of souls the wonderful news about Jesus Christ and His church.

I am so very proud of the excellent group of writers who have agreed, with no pay whatsoever, to share their wisdom and their knowledge of God and His inspired Word through these pages. These are people who truly care about others. They want to make a difference in the world. I believe that they are already doing that, but I believe that they will now be able to do so to a larger extent than even they had hoped for.

Gratitude must be expressed to all who have already been a source of encouragement to us in this new undertaking. The uplifting words, kind acts, and

financial assistance have all helped to reassure us that this great effort is indeed worthwhile. This is not and cannot be the project of just a few, but must be that of an ever-enlarging team of Christians conveying the love and compassion of Christ to the multitudes who desperately need to know of Him.

I have no hesitancy about asking our brethren, the church, to financially support this effort. There is absolutely no limit to what can be done through this means, but it obviously will require money for it to be accomplished. Surely those who are God's children will want to do what they can to assist in this mission effort.

What a serious undertaking it is to attempt to dispense the truth on any subject, but to try to do that with regard to **God's inspired Word, the Bible** – that is indeed a solemn endeavor! Add to that the idea of trying to do this on an international or worldwide basis, and you can see that this is not something to be taken lightly.

To our readers who are not yet disciples of Jesus like we read about in the New Testament: We care about you, we are concerned about you, we want you to be saved from your sins and go to heaven when you die. By looking at and reading this first issue of our magazine, you are already showing that you realize the need to be thinking very seriously about eternity. In every issue we will be having articles that will help you to better understand how to become a Christian.

To our readers who are already Christians according to the teachings of the New Testament: We will be providing you with material in each issue that will help you to grow in Christ, to become a more knowledgeable student of the Bible, and to help and encourage you as you live the Christian life before others.

As you read this and each succeeding issue of ***The Voice of Truth International***, you will become aware of the emphasis that is placed by this journal and its writers on the authority and essentiality of the Bible. The apostle Paul stated that the Word of God “...is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Our motive for bringing this publication into existence is to help as many as possible to have that inheritance to which Paul referred, and that inheritance is made possible only through God's Word. Thus, an effort will always be made in these pages to direct men and women to that Word. Our fervent prayer is that you will allow His Word to direct your life. †

Speciman of Thankfulness for The Voice of Truth International

Just a few days ago we received another box of *The Voice of Truth International*. ...It is useful in *every area of the world where I labor in the Lord's work*. In fact, just a few feet away from me right now, placed neatly by our front door at our home here on Tutuila Island, are about 5 copies of *Voice of Truth*. I have them ready because I know someone will come soon, and I'll be able to help them learn of God's Will for their life. I don't have to wonder nor think long about what to do with every issue of *Voice of Truth* when a box full arrives at our postal station. One of the best places to start, in fact, is with the postal and customs officers as I first get that yellow slip of paper from the postmaster, telling me that I've got a box waiting on me. I enjoy being able to find 2-3 people right there to whom I can talk and provide a copy of *Voice of Truth*.

Next on the list is to place some in the vehicle that we're driving. Whenever I get in the car to go somewhere, I always check to be sure I've got my driver's license, and then I check to be sure I've got a few tracts, and then at least 2 or 3 copies of *Voice of Truth*. Then, *I know I'm ready to go!* Also, whenever I'm working in a very remote area, and have need to travel at sea, I'll have a backpack and a waterproof duffle bag; inside, I'll carry 6-10 copies of *Voice of Truth* with me.

Here in American Samoa, every evening at around 6:00 p.m., you can hear the villages sound off a bell, signifying the beginning of evening prayer time. It's often the heads of families that conduct this time of prayer and short devotional. One of my favorite things to do in this country is to take a few minutes in offering *Voice of Truth* to people whom I know will most likely be conducting those devotionals at some point. I start by explaining that the articles are Bible based, with the Scriptures included and most normally printed in full. I then point out that the articles are about one page, and just the right length for the family's evening prayer/devotional.

Even when I am in the USA reporting, I love to take a copy when I walk out the door to go to a store or restaurant. I do this with a goal in mind— to meet someone new and talk to them about God; and before I leave them, I kindly offer them a copy of *Voice of Truth*. ...I've never been turned down. In fact, most often I have received a genuine "thank you" for providing the *Voice of Truth* in these situations.

So, today I wanted use this occasion to take a moment and pass along to you and others at *Voice of Truth*, those collective, sincere words of thanks that have come forth from people all over the world, throughout the years that we've been blessed to share *The Voice of Truth International*.

Randy English is a missionary to American Samoa in the South Pacific.

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL



“Will a man rob God?” These words were asked by Malachi to the people of Israel (3:8). Malachi charged Israel with the sin of robbing God. I’m sure the Israelites did not think they were actually doing that. In fact, the very idea of robbing God would have undoubtedly been appalling for Israel. After all, one of the Ten Commandments was “*You shall not steal*” (Exodus 20:15). Yet, that is exactly what Malachi said they had done.

How had they robbed God? Malachi answered they had robbed Him in tithes and offerings (3:8-9). They had not brought the tithes that God had commanded. Even while giving offerings to God, Israel had robbed Him by offering the lame and sick (1:8). He charged them with offering God things that they would not offer a secular ruler (1:8). When they refused to offer what rightfully belonged to God, they were robbing Him. Malachi further reminded them of God’s promise to bless them materially if they would only first give to Him (3:10-12).

We need to consider this same question. Will a man rob God? It is common

WILL A MAN ROB GOD?

Jerry Bates

to hear Christians justify their lack of generosity to God by saying that Jesus or the apostles never commanded us to tithe. That is true, but that does not mean that we are not commanded to give. “*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper; that there be no collections when I come*” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

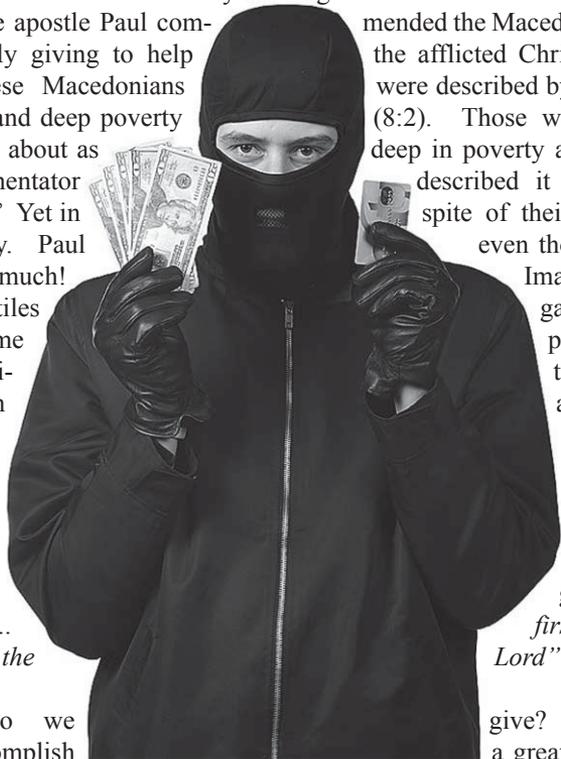
Christ had much to say concerning possessions. Close to half of His recorded sayings concern man and his possessions. In Luke 21 He observed some rich men giving their offerings to the Lord. He also saw a poor widow who contributed two

mites. A mite was the smallest Jewish coin in circulation and was worth very little. In comparison to the relatively large amounts contributed by the rich, it was insignificant. Yet, Jesus commended her by saying that she had given more than everyone, because she gave all she had (21:3-4). Why was she willing to give so much? Obviously it was given out of love. Her gift was small, but her love was great.

The poor widow is not the only liberal giver in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 8 the apostle Paul commended the Macedonia Christians the afflicted Christians in Jerusalem. These Macedonians were described by Paul as being in affliction and deep poverty (8:2). Those words carry the idea of being about as deep in poverty as you can get. One commentator described it as “rock bottom poverty.” Yet in spite of their poverty they gave liberally. Paul even thought they had given too much! Imagine this! These Gentiles gave generously to help some poor Jews, most of whom initially did not want to even accept them! Why did they give so generously? They gave because of their great love for God and appreciation for what He had done for them. They gave generously because they “... *first gave their own selves to the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Why do we give? We do not give to accomplish a great work. If that was true, most of us would not give anything, because we cannot give enough by ourselves to accomplish very much. We give for the glory and honor of God. We give because of our great love for God, and we simply express that love in our giving. If we give little, then our love and trust in God is correspondingly small. God’s love for us is greater than we can comprehend; therefore, how can we stand before God having little love in our hearts?

How much should we give? The Jews gave more than 10%. That was really just the starting point. Most Christians think they are poor. Of course, that is a very relative term. The amount we give is dependent upon how God has



prospered us. The poor widow had nothing left after she gave. The Macedonians gave even while in deep poverty. We should never use the excuse of being poor to justify our lack of generosity. God looks upon the heart and judges us, not just on the size of our gift, but on how we have been blessed. Paul aptly stated this principle in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: *“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

When we give ourselves to the Lord, how much we should give is not a big question. We give all we can, sometimes even more than others might think we should. After all, if we have really given ourselves, then God already has everything anyway. God has promised to bless us if we first give to Him. Jesus said, *“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you”* (Luke 6:38). This is not a promise of prosperity, but simply trusting in God to bless us with the things we need in this life.

Will a man rob God? That is a serious question, and the answer is just as relevant today as it was in Malachi’s day. I doubt that any Christian consciously thinks he is robbing God. However, when we fail to give as God intended, that is exactly what we are doing. Don’t be guilty of robbing God! †



ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL



Sometimes preachers are among some of the most arrogant people around, and particularly in the church. After all, Gospel preachers are high achievers, self-starters and leaders. They have prepared themselves to a degree often unparalleled by typical church members, and therefore, they may know more of God's Word than many of their peers; they may even know more than some of the elders under whom they serve. This can cause them to feel special or even elevated above other brethren.

Then, if that kind of preacher begins to compare himself with other preachers, he can even make an arrogant distinction between groups of preachers. He may succumb to the natural tendency to esteem his education and experience higher than someone else's education and experience. It is no wonder that aloofness develops sometimes among preachers over other members of the church, or that an animosity occurs between preachers of contrasting educational levels and degrees of experiences.

Comparing Ourselves with Ourselves Leads to No Good

Louis Rushmore

Either because of these developments or because of poor self-esteem, especially preachers who have been exposed to limited educational opportunities and experiences may harbor their own hard feelings toward fellow preachers. They may react poorly because of perceived or actual abuses toward them by fellow preachers. While all of this bitterness goes on, the cause of Jesus Christ is not served, souls are harmed, and other souls are not saved.

However, all of these perspectives are counterproductive to the progress of the cause of Christ and the spiritual health of the kingdom of God – the church. All of these attitudes remove the focus and emphasis from where it belongs – on Jesus Christ and His church. Everything we are and everything we do as God’s servants ought to be directed toward the advancement of the Lord’s church and the spiritual welfare of our brethren. This may surprise some, but these foregoing complaints between brethren and especially preaching brethren are not new but date back to the first century.

The apostle Paul rebuked first century Christians for comparing themselves with each other. *“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise”* (2 Corinthians 10:12 NKJV). He further taught that this type of sinful activity prevented both spiritual growth and the advancement of the Lord’s church.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers... (1 Corinthians 3:1-9)

It might be amusing to observe useless and unnecessary competition between brethren if it were not such a serious matter. We are all supposed to be on the same team, working toward the same end and serving the same Christ. If that were the case, then, it would be relatively unimportant who was able to do what as long as each child of God did fully what he or she was capable of doing for the Lord. Have we forgotten that we are many members of one body, each of us possessing differing abilities and subsequently different expectations by our Lord (1 Corinthians 12:12-25; Romans 12:4-5; Matthew 25:14-30).

Since we are all members of the same body of Christ, we experience the commonality of being brethren in Christ. We need to adopt the words of Abraham for ourselves in our present day. *“So Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no*

strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren” (Genesis 13:8-9).

As Gospel preachers and teachers, we are “*workers together with* [Jesus Christ]” (2 Corinthians 6:1), and we are “*fellow workers for the truth*” (3 John 8). Our differences in educational attainments or experiences pale in comparison to the great work to which we have dedicated our lives. All of us have a similar responsibility to serve the Lord in the Word of God. However, our responsibilities differ depending upon our academic preparedness, abilities and opportunities. We all have a general responsibility, but the more education we have or if we have the benefit of being financially supported, then, we have greater responsibility over others who have less of either.

In the first century, the apostle Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). He said of himself and others laboring in the Gospel with him that they were “*working with our own hands*” (1 Corinthians 4:12). “*Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me*” (Acts 20:34-35). The apostle Paul argued in 1 Corinthians 9:3-15 that he had a right to receive support for himself and his family, if he had had a family, but he opted not to receive a living from the church. Instead, he often worked to provide his own livelihood (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

Training of God’s servants in the first century also varied greatly. The apostle Paul was well educated in the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 22:3), and he excelled above his peers (Galatians 1:14). Other preachers, though, learned at home (2 Timothy 1:5) or were mentored by more experienced preachers (Acts 16:3; 15:37, 40; Galatians 2:1; Titus 1:4). The more experienced or better educated preachers of the first century were ‘*partners and fellow helpers*’ with less experienced or less educated preachers of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 8:23; Philemon 24).

The natural tendency may be to esteem oneself highly and abase others, but that is not the mature, Christian way. “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*” (Philippians 2:3-4). There is an old, homespun proverb that says something like, “A team of oxen pulling together do not kick the cart (or each other).” May each of us as God’s servants adopt at least that sentiment of dumb oxen – pulling together and neither kicking the church nor each other unnecessarily. Only then will the cause of Christ advance as it should. The Lord’s church is no place for division, and especially division between preaching brethren. We must get our personalities under control, and we must bridle our foolish pride. May God bless us all richly in the service of Jesus Christ our Lord!✠

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Our Father

Betty Burton Choate

“Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’” (James 4:5) Some have understood this Scripture to be saying that the human spirit is given over to lustful envy, not wanting to even consider the idea that the reference could be to jealousy on the part of the Holy Spirit....

First of all, this reference to “what the Scripture says” is not a direct quote from any other passage. Evidently, it is a summarizing statement of God’s deep love and concern for the hearts of His people. As far back as Exodus 20:5, He described Himself with these words: *“I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God....”* In 2 Corinthians 11:2, we see a further declaration: *“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*

The Holy Spirit, in inspiring the writing of Scripture, is the master of choosing the right words to convey His exact meaning with the joy or pathos He wants us to understand. Listen to His cry of anguish over the unfaithfulness of Israel:

“Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: “Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths.

“No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’

“I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of

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love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and **you became Mine,**" says the Lord GOD.

"Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD.

"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be ... Also My food which I gave you — the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey which I fed you — you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was," says the Lord GOD. "Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood."

Can we read such words — the words as of a devoted husband to a faithless wife — and fail to comprehend God's anguish at being so heartlessly rejected by the chosen bride for whom He had done so much? Should we be surprised that the love which reached out in protectiveness and ownership would also carry an aura of jealousy over the object of that love? Is that response not normal in the human heart, and are we not made in the image of God?

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The words that were given to Hosea in chapter 11 of that book are equally heart-rending. In this portrayal, God is the loving Father with His toddler son:

“When Israel was a child, I loved him I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them....

“My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him.

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim?

“My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred...”
(Hosea 11).

Are you a parent? Have you felt the vulnerableness created by the all-pervading love in your heart for your child? Have you experienced his joy at triumphs and his anguish at defeats? Have you gently led him along the step-by-step path to maturity? Have you felt his pain when he fell? And when there was nothing you could do to save him from his own bad choices, did the cutting and bleeding in your heart seem even greater than his own suffering?

This is the choice of precise words used by God’s Spirit to describe what we, as His children, are in position to do to Him. Love in any heart creates vulnerableness. It is no less true of the love God has for us. We can, in empty and meaningless words “call Him the Most High” — **use** Him — but at the same time deny Him that first position in our hearts. According to His own admission, the end result creates a struggle within Him: His justness and righteousness demand that unfaithfulness ultimately be punished, as Admah and Zeboiim were caught up in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. On the other hand, **His love for even that faithless wife and wayward child causes His heart to churn within Him with anguish and sympathetic pain because of their rejection.**

Yes, His Spirit within us “*yearns jealously*” over us, because of His intense love (James 4:5). Never does He willingly give up one of His own. †

Betty Burton Choate, widow of J.C. Choate, lives in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

GOD



Who Is the Holy Spirit?

J.C. Choate

For our study at this time we simply want to introduce the Holy Spirit to you. We need to understand — according to God’s Word — who He is, where He came from, His work in the world today, and many other things about Him.

First, let us understand that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead. There is God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Christ mentioned them in this order when He said to His apostles, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Ghost**”* (Matthew 28:19). In Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul declared that there is one God, one Christ, and one Spirit. Writing to the Roman Christians, he mentioned these three in this statement: “*Now I beseech you brethren, for the Lord **Jesus Christ**’s sake, and*

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for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Romans 15:30). Again he identified these three in 2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

Some refer to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as being a “trinity” since there are three. Although there are three distinct personalities, yet they are one. Many find this hard to understand. Some want to believe that there are three Gods. To get around this, there are those who say that Jesus is Himself, but sometimes He is personified as “God the Father” and sometimes He is also personified as the “Holy Spirit”. This teaching is known as the “Jesus only” doctrine, and of course it is false. Although we may find it hard to understand how there can be one God, one Christ, and one Holy Spirit, with them being three distinct and separate personalities or divine Beings, yet a “united one” [which is the meaning of the Hebrew word “one” (achid) that is used to describe God: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is **one!**” (Deuteronomy 6:4)], but this is what the Bible teaches and therefore we must accept it by faith, whether or not we can understand it.

Even though the word trinity is not mentioned in the Scriptures to describe God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as being three in one, they are referred to as being the Godhead. Paul preached to the Athenians, “*Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s devices*” (Acts 17:29). Speaking to those who had denied God, Paul declared, “*For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*” (Romans 1:20). Referring to Christ, he said, “*For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (Colossians 2:9). The Godhead, then, as used in these verses, would be made up of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

But how long has the Godhead been around? Where we read of one, we read of the others. We first read of them in the beginning of things, indicating that they existed before creation, or that they are Deity, being *eternal* in nature. The very first verse of Scripture reads, “*In the beginning God — Elohim, the plural form for “God” in the Hebrew language — created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). “God” [Elohim] includes God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Again, we read concerning creation, “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26). John said, “*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*

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*was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). “...And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over face of the waters”(Genesis 1:2). I think that in these verses of Scripture we can clearly see that all three of the Godhead were there in the beginning and therefore have always existed.*

If we made a study of each member of the Godhead, we would see that each one had a role to play or a work to do. This is seen throughout the Old Testament period, as well as in New Testament times. The Holy Spirit, in particular, inspired and guided various ones to write down the Scriptures so that they might be preserved and brought over even to our time.

Peter wrote, *“For we received from **God the Father** honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved **Son**, in whom I am well pleased, and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure **word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but **holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**” (2 Peter 1:17-21).*

You can see again in these verses that all three members of the Godhead are mentioned, but especially the role of the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit, is depicted as the One through Whom the Scriptures were given. Paul wrote, *“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).*

It has been said that the Old Testament refers to the Holy Spirit 88 times and uses 18 names for Him. At the same time He is spoken of in the New Testament 264 times while being called by 39 different names. It should also be pointed out that five of these names are common in both Testaments, while 52 different names of the Holy Spirit are used in the Bible.

The Holy Spirit is often pictured by humans as some type of mysterious force or ghost, but the Scriptures portray Him as a person with a personality. He is said to have emotions (Ephesians 4:30), a mind (Romans 8:27), He can speak (1 Timothy 4:1), and He can help with our infirmities (Romans 8:26), among these many other things:

1. By the Spirit we are born in baptism (John 3:3-5).
2. He is our helper (John 14:16-18).
3. He is our seal of redemption (2 Corinthians 1:22).

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4. He is our guarantor (2 Corinthians 5:5)
5. It is possible for us to grieve Him (Ephesians 4:30).
6. It is possible for us to quench Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
7. He leads us (Galatians 5:18).
8. We live in Him (2 Corinthians 3:6).
9. We walk in Him (Galatians 5:16).
10. Through Him we bear fruit (Galatians 5:32).
11. Through Him, we enter the body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13).
12. He dwells in us (2 Timothy 1:14; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17).
13. He abides in us (1 John 4:13).
14. He strengthens us (Ephesians 3: 16-21).
15. Through Him we put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13).
16. He bears witness that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).
17. He makes intercession for us (Romans 8:27; Ephesians 2:18).
18. He groans the words we cannot articulate (Romans 8:26).
19. He teaches us (1 Corinthians 2:13).
20. He discerns (1 Corinthians 2:14).
21. We pray in Him (Jude 1:19,20).
22. He gives life (John 6:63).
23. He gives liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17).
24. He transforms us as we look into the mirror of the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).
25. Through Him we reap life (Galatians 6:8).
26. Through Him we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).
27. We abound in hope through the power of the Spirit (Romans 15:13).
28. It is through the Spirit that we become the habitation of God (Ephesians 2:22).
29. He, along with the church, says, “Come” (Revelation 22:17). This wording, in itself, indicates strongly that the Holy Spirit is the abiding Presence with the church in this world, as we together await the coming of our Savior.

In subsequent studies we will consider the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ, in the apostles, in the early church, and in the church throughout the centuries. It will be our goal to present nothing without scriptural backing, so that whatever lessons we learn may be true to the Word of God, as revealed by the Holy Spirit. †

J.C. Choate, now deceased, wrote this study on the work of the Holy Spirit. It will be our goal to reproduce the chapters in these quarterly studies, before reprinting the text in book form.

The Bible and Christ

Cecil May, Jr.

Jesus said to the Pharisees of His day, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life”* (John 5:39-40). *“If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me”* (John 5:46).

The Pharisees were committed to Scripture. They obeyed the Law scrupulously and argued its fine points vigorously, but they missed its main point: The Messiah, the Son of David, was also the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and of the Psalms Who would die for sinners, and only those who believed on Him would continue to be part of faithful Israel and receive the promises of God.

They were experts in Scripture but failed to recognize the one of whom Scripture spoke.

Scripture is the very Word of God, produced by the breath of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus quoted Scripture and said it is what God said (Matthew 19:4,5). Every word of it (Matthew 4:4), every grammatical nuance (Gala-

tians 3:16), every implication God put in it (Matthew 22:31,32) is important. Carefully searching the Scripture in order to understand it and live by it is to be commended.

However, if we end up with the correct view on every divisive issue; if our linguistic scholarship enables us to correctly parse every verb and diagram every sentence; if we memorize a thousand verses; if we trace historically the interpretation of every significant doctrine from today’s theologians to the



earliest church father; if through it all we miss knowing, loving, and appreciating Jesus Christ, and especially if we miss trusting Him for the forgiveness of our sins, then the whole of our studies is vain, fruitless.

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Some “personal relationship with Christ” talk suggests a mythical, touchy-feely something that has noth-

Jesus Christ is a person, and any relationship with a person is personal.

ing to do with Scripture. Jesus Christ is a person, and any relationship with a person is personal. We do not have

entity, but living words from a loving Savior. We eagerly read His words. We want to please Him, so we search His Word for what He wants, and when we are satisfied that we have found it, we do it.

It is vital that we see beyond Scripture the Jesus to which Scripture points, but it is equally vital that we understand there is no Jesus except the one Scripture reveals. An imaginary Jesus, a figment

The Pharisees were experts in Scripture but failed to recognize the one of whom Scripture spoke.

a physical relationship with Jesus because He is no longer physically present, but we can have a personal relationship similar to what we have with a loved one from whom we are geographically separated.

Scripture points us to Christ, but we must accept and trust the Christ about whom it testifies.

In this personal relationship, we realize that a written communication is not arbitrary words from an impersonal

combining elements from today’s culture and man’s fertile imagination, is not real, not a person, and one cannot, therefore, have a personal relationship with that.

In Scripture, both in the Gospel accounts and in the epistles, we learn of Christ. As we see, admire, and trust Him there, we are transformed into His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Scripture points us to Christ, but we must accept and trust the Christ about whom it testifies. †

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

It is vital that we see beyond Scripture the Jesus to whom Scripture points, but it is equally vital that we understand there is no Jesus except the one Scripture reveals.

Fitting It All In

Brad Harrub, Ph.D.



Most of us can recall sitting through our high school classes, learning World History. However, stop for a moment and consider what was actually taught. Most individuals can recall going to worship on Sunday and Wednesday

night to learn “Bible.” Then through the week at school, they learned “history.” But the two never met. If God’s inspired Word is true, then one should be able to mesh biblical history with secular world history.

A biblical worldview demands a biblical timeline. If someone were to ask us the age of the earth, our answer should start with God’s Word, and then move into God’s world. Ultimately, what we see in God’s world will correspond to what we read in His Word. True science always points back to the Creator. [While the media wants the general public to view a contention between science and the Bible, remember that God is the Author of science, and the two go hand-in-hand.] So how old is the Earth? Here are seven verses to help answer that question:

Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Psalms 33:6,9: *“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. For He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.”*

Colossians 1:16: *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”*

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Matthew 19:4: *“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female.’”*

Mark 10:6: *“But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female.”*

1 Corinthians 15:45: *“And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”*

Genesis 3:20: *“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”*

From these seven verses we learn:

The earth was created in the beginning.

It was a fast event.

God created all things (not an evolutionary process).

Males and females were here from the beginning.

Adam was the first male (here from the beginning of creation).

The entire lineage of humanity would come through Adam’s wife, Eve.

Evolution teaches that the earth is billions of years old, and that man evolved a mere three million years ago. However, this manmade theory is diametrically opposed to the words of Jesus Christ, Who stated that man had been here from the beginning of creation. With that fact in mind, we can look at the family lineage of Adam in Genesis chapter 5 and begin to access a true historical age of the Earth. Using the father’s age at the point when he had children, we can build a timeline:

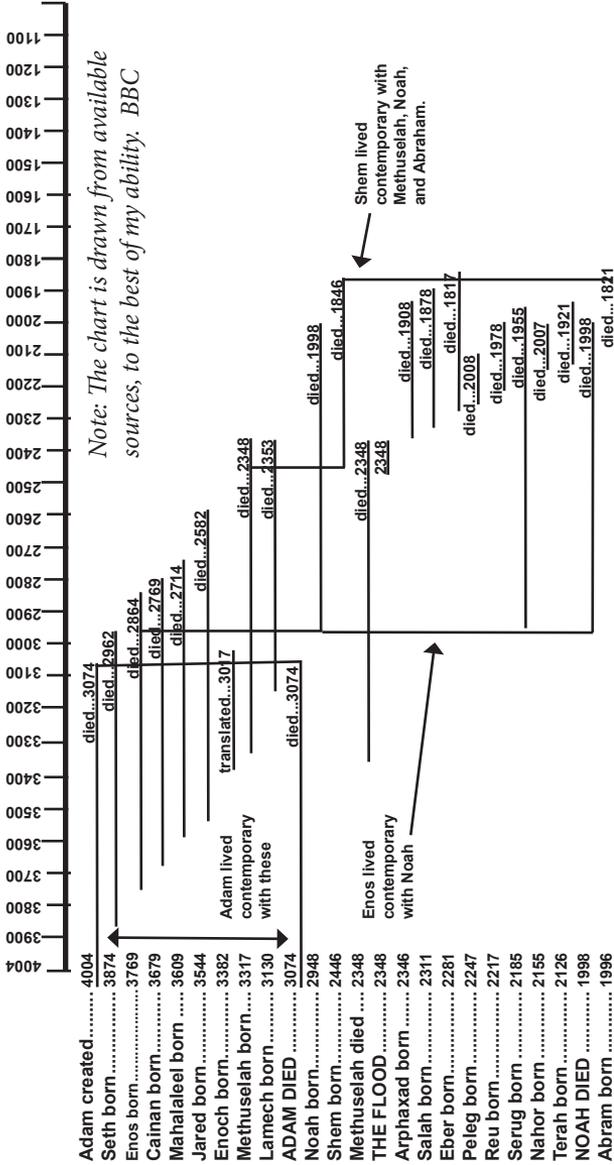
By continuing on through Genesis Chapter Five, we begin to get an accurate picture of the age of the earth. (See also Genesis 11 & Luke 3.) This timeline demonstrates that Adam could have spoken to Methuselah. Methuselah, likewise, could have spoken to Shem, who lived contemporarily with Abraham and Isaac!

Some might be tempted to assume there are gaps in the genealogies. However, the inspired New Testament Book of Jude (verse 14) records that Enoch was the seventh from Adam — a fact supported in Genesis 5. So if one is going to argue for missing genealogies, those gaps are going to have to come after Enoch (and there aren’t enough gaps in the world to provide the time needed to fit the supposed evolutionary timeline). Another point that should not be missed is this: Even if there were a few gaps in the genealogies, it does not affect the chronologies recorded in Genesis 5, and Genesis 11. Chronology is a record of time, while genealogy is a record of offspring. For someone to suggest that the genealogies do not contain legitimate chronological information, or that the genealogies somehow are so full of gaps as to render them useless, is to misrepresent the case, ignore the inspiration of the Bible, and distort the facts. †

Brad Harrub, Ph.D. lectures and writes on evidences, and is a coeditor for Focus Press in the publication of *Think Magazine* [focuspress.org].

EVIDENCES

A Chart Showing the Overlapping of the Lives of the Patriarchs:



The lifespan of Adam overlapped Lamech 56 years; Methuselah 246 years; Jared 470 years; Mahalaieel 535 years; Cainan 605 years; and Enos 695 years. Noah lived in the same world with Lamech 595 years; Methuselah 600 years; Jared 366 years; Mahalaieel 234 years; Cainan 179 years; and Enos 84 years. Shem shared the world before the flood with Lamech 93 years; Methuselah 98 years; Noah 448 years; and after the flood, he was contemporary with Abraham 150 years; and with Isaac 50 years. Since this was the age of patriarchs, some suggest that perhaps Shem was "Melchizedek" the king and priest of God who came to Abraham.

EVIDENCES

Who Gave Us Free Will?

Justin Hopkins

Last night I went camping with my oldest son. As we lay out on the ground and looked up at the stars, we were both at once awestruck at the vastness and magnificent beauty of the night-

time sky. My son quickly located the moon. From there, together, we found and identified a few prominent stars and constellations. As we wondered at the greatness of it all, I couldn't help but be impressed with how small we really are in comparison to all that is out there. We read from Psalm 19:1-3, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*"

I couldn't help but imagine somebody in a distant land, who had never read that passage, and didn't speak the same language as me, looking up at those same stars, and wondering from whence they came. It doesn't matter who you are, where, or when you live, or what your cultural background, the magnificence of the heavens cannot be denied. Paul said in Romans 1:19,20, "*that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*" Indeed, such wondrous beauty begs the question of how it got there.

Ultimately, there are but two choices: the universe was created by some eternal, powerful being, whose existence is outside the known material universe

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(God), or its origins are entirely natural and materialistic, emanating from itself. If the existence of the universe is to be explained through completely natural, material means, then we must conclude that the universe is a closed system, with no possibility for outside influences of any kind. This has consequences that are much more far reaching than one might at first realize.

Let us assume for a moment that nothing exists outside of this material universe, limiting all that is to being nothing more than energy and matter. This assumption has certain implications that are very personal for you and me. If that is the case, then you are simply a mass of cells – matter in motion. You are what you are because of the cold, uncaring forces of your genetic code and your environment. Everything that you are was either predetermined when your DNA was formed at conception, or else it is the natural interaction of your genetic predispositions to the environment in which you live. Essentially, everything that you ever have done, or ever will do was predetermined by natural forces that were set in motion before you were ever born.

This means that your intellect, your emotions, and your sense of free will are merely illusions, illusions that has have created by your genetic code as a coping mechanism. This has very far reaching implications for every decision you make and everything that you do in life, big or small. If you decide to become a Christian, to get married, start a new career, or make any major life decision, that choice is an illusion. Those choices must have been predetermined by your genetic code, and what appears to be your decision, is actually the matter that is your brain, reacting instinctively to the environment in which it lives. The same thing is true when you walk into a restaurant and decide that you want to order a plate of spaghetti instead of an egg roll, or when you choose to tell your spouse that you love her or him. Those feelings, desires, and choices must all be elaborate illusions thrust upon you by your DNA.

You see, to acknowledge that you have free will, and that your thoughts are your own, and your feelings and desires are real, is to acknowledge that something exists other than matter and energy, a thing called mind. This is a truth which we all intuitively recognize. Even the most ardent atheist, who accepts that free will is an illusion, will then choose what he wants to eat for dinner! Since mind exists, then the universe cannot be strictly materialistic. Since the universe is not strictly materialistic, then a strictly materialistic explanation for its existence is not sufficient. What is left? God! †

Justin A. Hopkins, living in Cleburne, TX, provides leadership in the development of “Into God’s World”, new Bible class curriculum for churches of Christ.

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HOCUS POCUS

Leah Hopkins

As I was growing up, sometimes a magic show would come on the television. I remember watching as these men would do some amazing tricks where tigers would disappear and other objects would appear out of nowhere, or so it would seem. My parents would explain that these were mere illusions, not real magic—just a sleight of hand, or a trick.

Also as I was growing up, I remember being taught in school the “The Big Bang Theory”, that is, that the universe came into existence when an infinitely small, infinitely dense particle of matter exploded, creating the universe in which we now live. This theory is similar to the biological



theory of spontaneous generation. Spontaneous generation is the theory that life can come from something other than a similar host, such as maggots coming from dead flesh as opposed to being the offspring of flies after they laid their eggs in a carcass. This theory was held for a long time, but has since been shown to be false, or so it would seem. I say, or so it seems, because even though scientists admit that this theory is false, many believe that life on the planet Earth did indeed come from non-life, which is a principle of spontaneous generation. This is the same principle that many well-known astronomers hold as well because that is exactly what the Big Bang Theory is—that everything in this universe came from nothing which exploded and formed everything!

As I have studied these theories I cannot help but be reminded of those magic

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shows when I was a child. The magician would pull that rabbit out of his hat, and everyone would “oooh” and “aahhh” and wonder from where it came. In the end though, we all knew that he had a secret compartment and the rabbit had been there all along. Something simply cannot come from nothing.

The proof is everywhere. When you go into your house, you know that the house was planned and built on purpose (Hebrews 3:4). Vehicles, clocks, tools and furniture did not just “poof” into existence. This is common sense. Just the slightest notice of our bodies shows purpose, not accident, and a designer, not an explosion. This Designer has revealed Himself to us from the beginning of time, and explained how everything came to be. The proof is all around us, how then can anyone say that life came from non-life, and that the wonders of the universe just happened without a designer, and be taken seriously? This also has a simple answer. Admitting that there is a designer leaves the possibility that this Designer is Jehovah, our God. Jehovah requires simple obedience, and so many do not want to face the consequences of their actions.

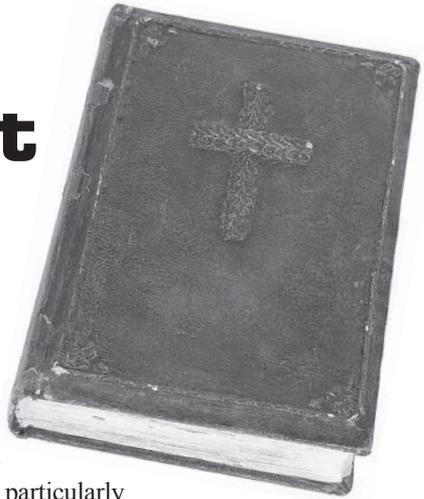
I will leave you one more thought on the matter. I can tell myself over and over again that there is no such thing as the moon. I can ignore the light in the sky at night and give other theories regarding the sea tides. It does not mean that I am right, though. Just like the magician planned his act and gathered all the pieces together that were necessary for a successful show, our Lord Jehovah also designed and made everything that is in existence. No amount of denial will make this fact any less true. No amount of closing our eyes and our ears and coming up with all kinds of impossible theories to the genesis of the universe will make us any less accountable to our Creator. †

Leah Hopkins, lives in Cleburne, TX and assists her husband, Justin, in the development of “Into God’s World”, new Bible class curriculum for churches of Christ.

“¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:18-20 NKJV).

The Preeminent Place of Purpose

David Deffenbaugh



I was recently shown a rock by someone who was rather proud of it. It wasn't a particularly pretty rock. Nor was it a rock containing any precious metal or gem. It was just a rock, very plain and ordinary. The reason the rock was kept, and with much pride, it should be added, was that this rock had been used for years to prop up a mother's bed that had a broken leg (the bed, not the mother). So long had the rock been so used that it had been worn to a slight bowl-shape on one side. Its value was sentimental, but to one person anyway, the rock has served a wonderful purpose, and thus, was a valued treasure.

Purpose is important. It can completely transform one's perceptions and appreciation. When we misunderstand something's (or someone's) purpose we're likely not to appropriately appreciate that thing (or person).

It seems that many people think the Bible's purpose is to make them wealthy, or healthy, or successful, or happy, or whatever. They seem to approach it with the question, "What can the Bible do **for** me?" That's the wrong question. It should be, "What will the Bible do **to** me?" The purpose of the Bible is to make man acceptable to God. For instance, the Book of Leviticus is a collection of many of the specific precepts and commandments that make up the Law of Moses. What was the purpose of all those commandments, instructions, directives, and prohibitions? That's clearly explained in the later portions of the book, "*Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people*" (Leviticus 26:11,12).

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God wanted these people to be His, and in order to do so it was necessary for them to be holy as He is holy (19:2).

This purpose continues throughout the Scriptures. Paul described God's intent that His church be acceptable to Him in these terms, *"that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless"* (Ephesians 5:26,27). Peter adopted some familiar Old Testament terminology when he wrote, *"But you are... a people for God's own possession,..."* (1 Peter 2:9). God's desire is for a people He can embrace, fellowship, and claim as His own. To that end, His revealed Word informs us of our predicament in sin, the salvation that is possible only through Jesus Christ, the church as the body of the saved, and the kind of lives to be lived by redeemed people.

When we realize the Bible is all about changing and shaping and directing us, it is remarkable how our changed perception of its purpose allows it to be effective to that end. †

When we realize the Bible is all about changing and shaping and directing us, it is remarkable how our changed perception of its purpose allows it to be effective to that end.

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

Proper Dress for the Battle....

Few men would dare to go bear hunting with a buggy whip. You would not try to handle a burglar or robber with kid gloves. So, in going into battle against the devil, you would not expect to win a victory without proper attire.

Instructions from the soldier of Christ are: *"Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Don't expect to win a single victory in the war with satan by training on creampuffs and strawberry shortcake! With the proper training and proper attire, you can win over this formidable adversary. —David Sandlin

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BIG

Words Can Be

SMALL!

Ardron Hinton

One of the most important words in the Christian's vocabulary is, “No”. People are led into doing things they actually oppose just because they aren’t good at saying, “No”. Recently Jim Davidson wrote, “The only way any person can have the best life has to offer is to learn how to say “no” at the right time and in the right way.” Proverbs 1:10 says, “*My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.*” (Just say, “No!”)

Of course “No” isn’t the only big little word. Most of the really key words in the Bible are short. “God” is a three-letter word in English. The great trio of the Christian life, “**faith**” — “**hope**” — “**love**”, only use 13 letters together. And on the other side of the battle, words naming what we must avoid are usually short — “**sin**”, “**evil**”, “**hate**”. “**Grace**” has five letters; “**trust**” and “**obey**” have nine between them. And what of such simple words as “**teach**”, “**study**”, “**serve**”, “**sing**”, “**pray**”, and “**give**”?

The real point we’re trying to make is this: The basics of Christ’s religion are not really that hard to understand. Most of what we really need to know is stated in simple language somewhere in the Scriptures. Remember, the New Testament was given to the masses, not to a select few. †

Ardron Hinton works with the Roosevelt Church of Christ in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

The basics of Christ’s religion are not really that hard to understand.

THE WORD OF GOD

Preaching the Gospel: Philippians 1:12-18

Gary C. Hampton

Opportunities Found In Imprisonment

Some might have thought imprisonment would have stopped Paul's work. God, Paul said, used the circumstances to present more opportunities to preach. The apostle, in chains, found doors opened. Recognizing how the Almighty used his circumstances should encourage us to look for open doors in times of trouble (Philippians 1:12). Paul wrote to the Roman brethren, "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*" (8:28). Good can come even from the imprisonment of one of God's great preachers.

Knowledge of Paul's imprisonment was widespread and gave people cause to question why, but such questions provided him with numerous opportunities to tell about Christ. They could bind the messenger, but not his message. He told Timothy, "*Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained*" (2 Timothy 2:8,9). Paul, in chains, was able to tell Caesar's elite that he was in bonds for Christ (Philippians 1:13).

Brethren were also emboldened by Paul's bondage. His willingness to die for the preaching of Jesus stood as a great example for those around him who may have formerly been fearful (Philippians 1:14). His words to the Ephesian elders may very well have given them more courage to carry out God's work. He told them he did not know what would happen in Jerusalem, except that the Holy Spirit had revealed He would be put in chains and suffer through tribulations. "*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to*

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myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:22-24; compare 21:13).

Motives for Preaching

Evidently some were jealous of Paul’s success as a preacher. They promoted a party spirit, encouraging others to follow them (Philippians 1:15). In verse 16, the word translated “selfish ambition” actually suggests they were campaigning like politicians for support. **These men had the right message, but the wrong motive.** In 1 Corinthians 16:14 Paul said, *“Let all that you do be done with love.”* Certainly the party spirit omitted that important element. **Preachers who know God’s purpose will seek to unite all Christians under the Lordship of Jesus, with no emphasis on personal followings** (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

Others preached Christ with good will for Paul and a love for the truth. They apparently saw Paul’s determination to defend the Gospel and were provoked to a greater love of the truth (Philippians 1:17). **We need to have the right message and the right motive.** Rather than being like children who believe whatever message they last heard, we need to speak *“the truth in love,”* so that we might *“grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”* (Ephesians 4:15). Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 13:13 remind us that great works are made worthless when love is missing.

Rejoicing in the Preaching of Christ

While some preached Christ, hoping to gain a personal following, Paul was still thankful Christ was being preached (Philippians 1:18). This lets us know they were not false teachers, but preached strictly out of a wrong motive. The apostle to the Gentiles was able to rejoice even though those brethren were politicking against him.

Remember, when Paul was blind, he waited in a house on Straight Street for someone to come to give him his sight and to tell him what he must do. Jesus told Ananias to *“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel”* (Acts 9:15). That goal dominated the rest of Paul’s life. It did not matter to him how it was accomplished. He did not worry about men getting the credit, because he knew that God was the source of any fruit which was born (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). †

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



Romans 13:1-7

Jerry Bates

1. Should Christians be subject even to evil governments? (v. 1)
2. Who was the Roman emperor when Paul wrote this letter?
3. Who is the ultimate authority for everyone? (v. 1)
4. How did the governing authorities get their authority? (v. 1)
5. Does this mean that all governments are right and they can do as they please since they are the authority?
6. Who are we really resisting when we resist governing authorities? (v. 2)
7. What will happen to those who resist? (v. 2)
8. For rulers are not a terror to _____ works, but to _____?
(v. 3)
9. How can we be unafraid of governing authorities? (v. 3)
10. Is it wrong in the sight of God for governments to kill people by the sword? (v. 4)
11. Governing authorities are God's ministers. What purpose do they serve?
(v. 4)
12. For what two reasons should we be subject to governments? (v. 5)
13. What does it mean to obey for conscience sake? (v. 5)
14. Should Christians pay taxes? (v. 6)
15. Render therefore to all their due: _____ to whom _____ are
due, _____ to whom _____, _____ to whom
_____, _____ to whom _____ (v. 7)

(See the back cover for answers.)

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

NOTES: This passage concerns the Christian's responsibility to governments. Governments only receive the authority they have from God; therefore, they should not think they can do as they please. Everyone, even kings, are still subject to God. Paul wrote that the main function of governments is to punish the evildoer. Vengeance is forbidden to individuals but is delegated to civil authorities. God sometimes brings judgment upon individuals through governments.

Christians should be subject to civil authorities, even if we do not agree with the law, in order to avoid punishment and also because by obeying them we are obeying God. Thus, we should obey even if we are sure we will not get caught, because God is still looking at us. Since rulers are God's servants, then it is right and proper to pay taxes and to honor and respect various rulers for the position that they hold.

How should we react when living under a government that is evil and oppressive? Certainly many rulers do not fulfill their roles as God would want. Exactly what a Christian can and should do to oppose such evil governments is a hard question to answer. Governments are not the absolute authority; God is! Therefore, when laws conflict with the law of God we must obey God (Acts 5:29). Nevertheless, the general rule is that Christians obey whatever government under which they happen to live. Christianity does not promote insurrection or treason, and Christians should be careful not to be viewed as insurrectionists.

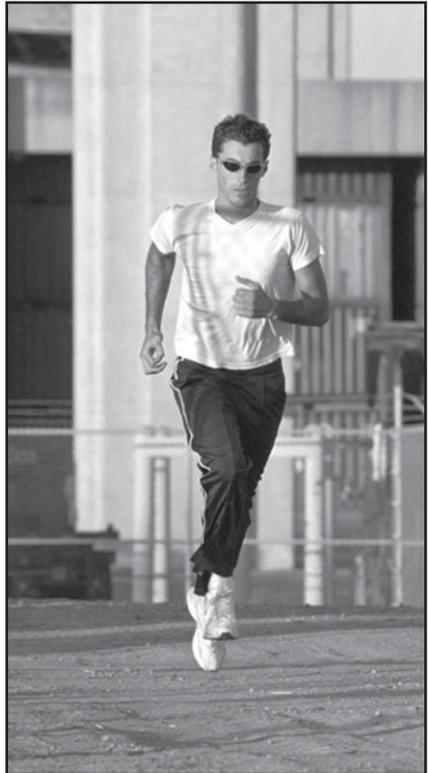
The Race Isn't to the Swift But to the One Who Finishes

Jodie Boren

A racing (or homing) pigeon is an amazing bird, capable of finding his way back to his home loft from great distances. When it's time for the race, all the racing club members gather with the pigeons they're entering in the race. The birds are banded with a special band and all clocks are synchronized. The birds are then shipped (or taken) to the predetermined destination and are released simultaneously to race home. When the birds arrive at their home loft, they must enter the loft, where the special band is removed and placed in the clock, recording the exact time of the bird's arrival. If the bird, for whatever reason, doesn't go into the loft where the special band can be removed and inserted into the clock, the time wasted can make a loser out of what should have been a winner!

If we are to “fly away” to our home in heaven, we can't stop serving the Lord and rest on our laurels — we have to finish the race. It is after one finishes his course that the crown of righteousness awaits him (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

In Galatians 6:9 Paul says, “*And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*” As Christians we have been commissioned by the Lord to carry His Gospel into all the world, a world filled with sin and sorrow. The Lord wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the



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truth (1 Timothy 2:4). This is a great work, and we can't afford to grow weary. We must work the works of Him who sent us while we live, for the death comes when we will no longer be able to work (John 9:4). No wonder Paul exhorted us, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Many, however, are like the seed in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23) that fell among the thorns. The Word is received, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and they become unfruitful. Paul asks, *"Ye did run well, who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?"* (Galatians 5:7). The devil? No! Now it's true that Satan fills our hearts with all sorts of excuses — greed, pride, etc., just as he did with Judas (John 13:2) and Ananias (Acts 5:3). We must remember, however, that they didn't have to listen to Satan and yield to his tempting, and neither do we. With every temptation, God is faithful to give us a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). Didn't Peter write, *"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation"* (2 Peter 2:9)?

In the Olympic races, the runners must all abide by the rules. One cardinal rule is that a runner must finish the race in order to be qualified to win. This is elementary. We all understand this. This principle is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24 where he exhorted us to *"So run, that ye may obtain."* In our spiritual race, we also must abide by God's rule, as we are taught in Philippians 3:16. These rules teach us that we must finish our race. Our Lord expressed it succinctly in Revelation 2:10 when he said, *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* As the wise man wrote, *"The race is not to the swift"* (Ecclesiastes 9:11), but as the Lord says, *"but to the one that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matthew 24:13).

Brethren, *"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10). May we lift up our eyes and look on the harvest and finish our race by faithfully serving the Lord all the days of our lives. †

Jodie Boren is a retired Gospel preacher and artist living in Hartville, Missouri, USA.

Brethren, let's FINISH THE RACE!



BAREFOOT IN THE PULPIT

Bobby Dockery

In common with most preachers, I suspect, I have a recurring dream about being unprepared for Sunday. In my own particular nightmare, it is Sunday morning and almost time for worship...I'm running late and can't get my socks and shoes on...No matter how I struggle, my socks won't fit or I get them on wrong-side out. I keep struggling and struggling, and it is getting closer and closer to time for the service to begin... I know I'm not going to make it. Then, suddenly, I'm standing in the pulpit and I look down in horror and see that I'm barefoot!

I'm pretty sure I know what my dream is about — **preparation!** Preachers live with a never-ending series of deadlines. There are always new sermons and class lessons to be prepared — always a new deadline staring one in the face! As Batsell Barrett Baxter used to say to his preacher students, “The tyranny of Sunday is that it comes every week.”

The need for preparation is something we all must take seriously. Nowhere is this truer than in the spiritual realm. The prophet Amos warned long ago: *“Prepare to meet thy God...”* (Amos 4:12). The word “prepare” is one that millions of people need to get more serious about in many ways.

1. Prepare for Worship. An older preacher once told of the way his family prepared for Sunday worship when he was a boy. On Saturday night baths were taken, overalls were washed, and shoes were shined. The father of the family didn't much hold with Saturday night parties or other late activities. He thought the family ought to be getting ready for Sunday! That's an attitude that we need to recapture! Too many tired saints drag in, bleary-eyed, on Sunday because of Saturday's activities. Worship would be more meaningful if we made better preparation. Read and think about the Word of God before you come! Pray for those who will be leading

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in worship! Come with eager anticipation and expectation! Prepare!

2. Prepare For Life. Life is filled with so many tests... so many obstacles... so many challenges... so many disappointments... How do we get ready! We need to grow deep spiritual roots so we'll be able to withstand the storms of life when they come. We need spiritual food and exercise. That's why Sunday morning Bible classes are so important for the whole family! That's why Sunday evening and Wednesday evening services are vital! That's why Bible reading, prayer, service, and sacrifice are essential! They help us prepare for life!

3. Prepare for Eternity. In the Old Testament God sent a messenger to a king to say, "*Set your house in order for you must die*" (2 Kings 20:2). That's good advice for all of us. Death is an appointment on the calendar of life for every one of us (Hebrews 9:27). This life is a proving ground which we have been given to ready us for our

We are living in the shadow of eternity. The real business of life is getting ready for what comes next!

meeting with God. We are living in the shadow of eternity. **The real business of life is getting ready for what comes next!**

The ultimate nightmare is to get to Judgment and to find that you are unprepared. "*You must be ready,*" Jesus said, "*because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him*" (Matthew 24:44). Are you prepared? †

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

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14 NKJV; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10).

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The Believer Whom Christ Rejects

Perry N. Hall

Our title denotes a very sad thought. Nonetheless, it is certainly true. There are believers that Christ rejects. Many of our religious neighbors have for years defended the doctrine of salvation by “faith alone”. According to the doctrine of “faith only”, a person is said to be saved at the point of faith, without any further conditions to be met by the believer (as stated by one professor, “plus nothing, minus nothing”). Two years in a denominational university taught me first-hand that this is their position. It is a false and a tragic one.

Various proponents of this doctrine have tried to explain away the clear teachings of such passages as John 12:42,43. Here it is precisely stated that some rulers of the Jews believed on Him, but because of a love of that glory that comes from men, refused to confess their faith. (Greek imperfect tense denotes that they continued not to confess.) False teachers seek to avoid the plain teaching of this passage by saying this was merely an intellectual faith of the mind and not of the heart. To suppose that one kind of faith comes from the mind or intellect and another from the heart is a false supposition. The Bible makes no real distinction between the two. There was in their hearts that power that could lead to their salvation. But because of love of the wrong thing, it stopped short of that which perfects faith — obedience. They refused to confess Christ.



Westcott says of this passage: “It is remarkable that St. John uses of this belief the phrase which marks completeness of belief. The belief only lacked confession, but this defect was fatal. Compare 2:23, where belief complete in itself is practically imperfect.”

Westcott recognizes in this passage the same problem of a devil’s faith that

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James discusses in Chapter Two. A faith that stands alone, that does not lead to obedience, is dead, spiritually fatal (James 2:14-26). It needs to be perfected in obedience before it justifies us before God.

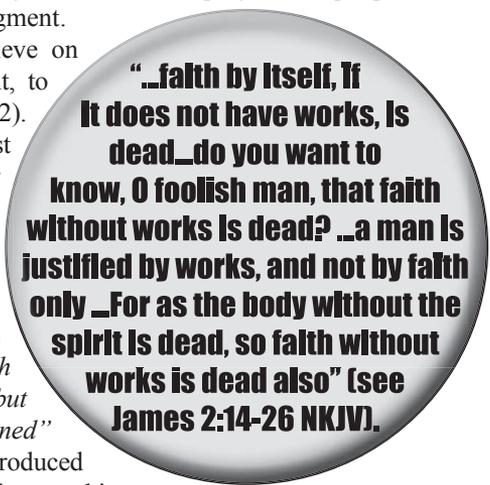
Further, in Matthew 7:21ff, Jesus showed that a faith, though it confesses Him as Lord and is active in many areas, yet does not lead the individual to actually obey God's will, makes one only a worker of iniquity. Such people will be rejected by Jesus in the Day of Judgment.

To those who receive or believe on Him, He gives power, or the right, to become children of God (John 1:12). They have the authority from Christ to become children. Laboring under the One who had said all authority in heaven and earth was His (Matthew 28:18-20), the apostles went forth preaching the Gospel to every creature in order to produce faith in Christ. Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). When that faith was produced

in the hearts of unbelievers through the preaching of the Gospel (Romans 10:17), they were given authority to become children of God. To such believers on Pentecost who asked, *"What shall we do?"* Peter answered under inspiration of the Spirit, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* When they obeyed, they were added to the family of God, the church (Acts 2:41,47; 1 Timothy 3:15).

Saul came to believe on the road to Damascus that Jesus was the Christ, but he was still in his sins. In Damascus, Ananias told him... *"Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins"* (Acts 22:16).

From the Great Commission and the accounts of conversions that we find in Acts, we see those that Jesus will accept (cf. Hebrews 5:8,9). He will reject all who do not render obedience (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). This means that those who proclaim that men are to only believe and they will be saved are tragically in error concerning salvation from sin. May we be used of God to lovingly help all men see and obey the truth. †



"...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead—do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ...a man is justified by works, and not by faith only—For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (see James 2:14-26 NKJV).

Perry N. Hall is a Gospel preacher living in Tyler, Texas, USA.

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Casting Behind the Back

Vance Hutton

The title of this article can be thought of from the realm of two drastic extremes or opposites. One offers hope and is the brightest and most beautiful picture in all the world. The other is one of gloom and despair, and it is the darkest and saddest of all pictures. Each of us finds himself involved in one of these opposites. We are dealing with the sad fact of man casting God's words behind his back and the wonderful fact of God casting man's sins behind His back.

I. Man Casting God's Words Behind His Back: A beautiful prayer by the Levites is recorded in Nehemiah 9. They praised God for His goodness and then made a heart-rending statement about the children of Israel in verse 26, *"Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations."* They had been warned in Deuteronomy 6 about forgetting God, but they turned their backs upon His law and went their own way to do their own thing. They even became vicious toward those who sought to bring them back to God. They persecuted the prophets. Jesus spoke of such men in Matthew 23:37.

God said that Jeroboam had cast Him behind his back (1 Kings 14:9). The psalmist in Psalm 50:17 said of the wicked that they hated instruction and cast the Lord's words behind themselves. Ezekiel spoke for God in Ezekiel 23:35 and said of some that they had forgotten God and had cast Him behind their backs. Jeremiah spoke of those who said they would not do what the Lord desired (Jeremiah 6:16). Amos was told by the northern tribes that they did not want to hear him (Amos 7:12,13). People stopped up their ears when Stephen preached (Acts 7). Jesus spoke of those who had closed their ears (Matthew 13:15). Felix and Agrippa would not obey. Some mocked Paul's message in Acts 17. Oh, how sad when folks cast God's law, His words, His instructions behind their backs. Peter said all such will be destroyed (Acts 3:23).

II. God Casting Man's Sins Behind His Back: This picture is one of beauty and hope. Isaiah 38:17 records the words of Hezekiah, *"for thou have cast all my sins behind thy back."* Here is the God who sees all (Psalm 69:5; Proverbs 15:3). He forgives to such a degree that there are no sins to be seen. He had forgiven the sins of Hezekiah and blotted them out of His memory. They were cast into the depth of the sea (Micah 7:19). They were so removed as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

SALVATION

Think of our sins being remembered against us no more (Hebrews 8:12). Think of being washed away, of us being cleansed from them (Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5). This is possible only through the precious blood of our Lord (1 Peter 1:18,19). A debt is forgiven and remitted (Acts 2:38). We can be made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). Notice that Hezekiah said God would cast **all** his sins behind His back. First John 1:9 speaks of being cleansed of **all** unrighteousness. Oh, how great is the mercy of our God!

Now, where do you find yourself? Are you casting the Lord's words behind your back, or is God casting your sins behind His back? Both are not taking place. Let us esteem the Lord's words as greater than our necessary food (Job 23:12), and then we will be well on the way to enjoying the cleansing from our Lord. †

Vance Hutton is the preacher for the church of Christ in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Thomas Baxley

Countless millions across the globe and throughout history have asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible says in John 14:6 that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus. The vast majority of people on earth believe that all we have to do to go to heaven is to believe in Jesus. However, the Bible says that if we want to go to heaven, we have to obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). Christ is coming back, Paul said, and will take vengeance on those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the Gospel. This means, then, that if you know God and do not obey the Gospel, you will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction.

The next question should be, "What is the Gospel?" This is a critical question to ask because it has to be obeyed to go to heaven. The Gospel can be found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, and it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. How can we be obedient to the death, burial, and resurrection? Paul addressed this in Romans 6:1-4. We are united with Christ in the likeness of His death through baptism. If we want to go to heaven, we must obey the Gospel, which means submitting ourselves to being baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38).

Thomas Baxley is the evangelist for the Highway 9 church of Christ in Piedmont, AL, USA.

Jesus Prays for Unity

Wayne Barrier

Jesus taught that He would build or create His church (Matthew 16:18), and His church would stand against every force brought against it. The church is the vehicle and only way that man can go from this world into heaven and eternal life. Jesus died to purchase the church (1 Peter 1:18,19). He adds obedient believers to His church (Acts 2:37,38,42,47). There is only one true church (Ephesians 4:4). Today, there are many churches that claim to be the true church established by Jesus. How important is unity within His church?

Jesus addressed this question. In John 17:20-23, He prayed, *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.”*

This passage reveals several principles that are important for us to understand regarding unity. First, believers must be “one” if non-believers are to be persuaded to obey God and be saved. Divisions drive people away, and in any organization division is a certain path to failure. Second, the passage teaches that for one to be perfect there must be unity with other believers. We are perfect if we are free from sin. Division is sin (1 Corinthians 1:10). We are freed from sin (Romans 8:1) when we are *“in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3) and forgiven of our sins. Christ commands that we obey Him (Hebrews 11:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 28:20) to be in Him. Finally, unity between believers is compared with the relationship between Christ and God. There is no disagreement and no division of purpose, action, and desire.

How can we have unity in Christianity today? We must all follow the teachings of *“all Scripture”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The basis of doctrine and righteousness is revealed in the Bible. We must be careful to define doctrine based on *“all Scripture”* rather than incomplete Scripture. Any doctrine or religious practice based on anything other than the Scriptures results in division and disobedience. We must know all Scripture to understand God’s will. We then can have the unity that pleases Jesus. He prayed for unity. †

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

THE CHURCH

The Church

Andrew Connally

❖ The church is not made up of people who believe they are better than others, but rather it is made up of those who realize that they should be better than they are and must continually strive to do better always.

❖ The church is not made up of perfect people, but people who realize they are following a perfect Lord and a perfect law and therefore must do the very best they can.

❖ The church is not made up of people who never make mistakes, but those who often acknowledge their mistakes and then forsake them. Never must we seek to justify them or continually make the same mistakes over and over again.

❖ The church is not trying to withdraw from everyone, but rather to draw everyone into fellowship and love who are willing to walk in the light where God the Father and Christ the Son are found.

❖ The church is not trying to set up arbitrary rules to hinder anyone, but rather to show the rule of Christ which helps everyone.

❖ The church is not trying to take the joy out of life, but rather is trying to put real joy into every life it touches.

❖ The church is not trying to make you feel ugly, but is trying to instill the beauty of holiness in your life.

❖ The church is not trying to become the master of your life, but trying to get you to master yourself.

❖ The church is not trying to separate you from your money but rather is trying to keep your money from separating you from your God.

❖ The church is not trying to rob your life of priorities, but rather trying to get you to put the priorities in your life... †

Andrew Connally (deceased) did extensive mission work in various countries in Africa.

“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7:19,20).

THE CHURCH



One as Good as Another?

Bill Dillon

Two men were talking about the relative merits of the automobiles they had just purchased. With good humor, each was giving reasons why he thought his car was better than the other. A mutual friend happened by, and they tried to enlist him in their friendly argument. “Which car would you rather have?” they asked. Not wanting to be drawn into the dispute, he merely said, “Oh, I don’t know. I suppose one is as good as the other.”

“One as good as another?” Maybe regarding some things, but certainly not all things. Is one husband or wife as good as another? Is one house as good as another, or is one food as good as another?

The Bible teaches that Jesus built His **one church**, purchasing it with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28). That is the church about which we need to be concerned. One is added to this church as he expresses his love for Jesus and obeys His commands. Where are you — in the Lord’s church, or in some other? †

Bill Dillon preaches for the Lord’s church in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas, USA.



Sitting on the Fence

Paul Holland

There's a funny picture in the December 1, 2012 issue of World magazine. An SUV is sitting straddle of a fence on the Mexico/Texas border. The drug smugglers tried to use ramps to drive their Jeep Cherokee over the fence. The fence is 14' high and the Jeep became stuck as it crossed the fence. Patrol agents caught the smugglers as they were trying to free the vehicle.

Straddling the fence. God does not care for people who are indecisive. In many areas, there is no middle ground. No ground for compromise. There is no middle ground between an atheist and a theist, and God is decidedly theistic!

When we learn the truth, we do not need to sit on the fence. We need to learn the truth, be convicted of the truth, and stand on the truth. James wrote: *“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded”* (James 4:8). James is telling us not to be a fence-straddler.

To the church in Laodicea, Jesus said, *“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth”* (Revelation 3:15,16). Jesus is telling us not to be a fence-straddler.

In Matthew 12:30, Jesus says, *“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”* So, do not be a fence-straddler.

Our conviction needs to be — *“The Bible teaches...”* That's where I stand. When we do that, we stand with Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jesus Himself. There's no better place to be found. †

Paul Holland works with the church of Christ in Paris, Kentucky,USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

¹⁴ *"I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*
¹⁵ *Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.* ¹⁶ *Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;* ¹⁷ *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* ¹⁸ *For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.* ¹⁹ *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.* ²⁰ *Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.* ²¹ *It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.* ²² *Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.* ²³ *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin"* (Romans 14:14-23 NKJV).

Does the New Testament teach that we sin when we do not abide within the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11) – the Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9) – the Christian faith? Yes, it does – in several passages. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV). "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...**" (1 Corinthians 4:6). "...contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

However, Romans 14:23 is **NOT** one of those passages. In the **context** of Romans 14:14-23, the doctrine of Christ – the Gospel – the Christian faith is not the subject discussed. Romans 14: 23 reads, "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for **whatever is not from faith is sin.**" The context in which Romans 14:23 appears pertains to an individual's conscience. Therefore, the passage teaches one not to violate his conscience, for if he does, he commits sin. "Faith" in Romans 14:23 represents one's conscience and not the system of faith we commonly call the Gospel or the doctrine of Christ.

It is always right to teach truth found in the passages that reveal that particular item of truth. It is always wrong to misuse a passage from God's Word – even if teaching a biblical truth.

Stem Cells and Biblical Ethics

Rod Kyle

Stem cell research holds much promise for significant advances in curing many current health problems. But what about the ethics of embryonic stem cell research? Does God allow His creation to “play” with these microscopic humans?

The Bible plainly teaches “life” belongs to God (Ezekiel 18:4). His “ownership” is clearly taught in the following verses — Genesis 2:7, Acts 17:25, and 1 Timothy 6:13. Therefore, only He can legislate when it is to be taken. For humans to end the life of other humans without God’s approval is murder (Exodus 20:13).

This is exactly what scientists do when they begin human life in a test tube, and then decide to terminate it. Are they arrogantly trying to slip into God’s shoes? In fact, to treat human embryos as “biological mush” has to be the ultimate in human degradation and conjures up memories of Nazi medical research on concentration camp victims. Interestingly enough, both the Nazis and embryonic stem cell researchers share the same godless view of human origins. Jesus said, “*You will know them by their fruits*” (Matthew 7:16-21). Enough said!

So, are we to deny spinal, Alzheimer, diabetic, heart, and Parkinson’s disease sufferers many potential medical benefits in pursuit of upholding God’s rules of human conduct? No. God has placed within His creation better alternatives. It is common knowledge that non-embryonic stem cells show the best promise in alleviating human suffering. It is not an “either or” situation as our “media stirrers” would have us believe.

All the knowledge in the world is worse than useless if not coupled with submission to the Creator. The prophet Micah 2,500 years ago spoke to today’s biological researchers (Micah 6:8). His words are also the key to successful medical advancement today! †

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Some Things Cannot Be Done

Hollis Miller

Have you ever heard it said that one can do what he wants to do if he wants to do it badly enough? There is truth in the saying, but the desire to do something is not the whole story.

Jesus taught that some things are not possible. According to Matthew 6:24, it is not possible to serve two masters. God and money cannot both be served at the same time. James wrote that where bitterness and rivalry (strife) exist, peace cannot reign (James 3:16). He also said that one cannot be a friend of the world without becoming the enemy of God (James 4:4).

Try as one might to be a loyal servant of both God and materialism, the effort is doomed to failure. All attempts to be friends with the worldly world are destined to make one the enemy of God. No church, marriage, or family can have peace when bitterness and strife rule.

According to the apostle Paul, saving faith comes through hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). This means that saving faith does not come through an emotional experience or the beauty of a sunset. No one can substitute his own ideas of what faith in God should be without abandoning God's definition of faith. The Pharisees of Jesus' day tried it and failed. Paul said of them: "*I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God*" (Romans 10:2,3 NKJV). We attempt the impossible when we lay aside the Word of God and adopt our own ideas about righteousness.

Jesus asks for faith in Him, for minds and hearts that are submissive to His teaching. During His earthly sojourn Jesus rebuked those who called Him "Lord, Lord," but failed to do what He taught (Luke 6:46). We have no evidence that the passing of twenty centuries has changed His attitude.

Let us beware of attempting the impossible. Some things cannot be done. †

Hollis Miller is an evangelist living in Murray, Kentucky, USA

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Dispelling Popular Myths About “The Thief on the Cross”

Kevin L. Moore

First of all, the two men who were crucified on either side of Jesus were not common thieves. A thief is someone who secretly removes an item from your pocket without your knowledge or approval, or who sneaks into your house while you're away on vacation and steals your possessions. The crimes of the men executed with Jesus were much more sinister. They are generically referred to as “criminals” (*kakourgon*) in Luke 23:39, but in Mark 15:27 they are more specifically identified as *lestai*, i.e. “robbers” or “bandits.” In other words, they had used brute force to carry out their crimes and were therefore violent criminals. In fact, the same word is used to describe Barabbas (John 18:40), who had been arrested “*with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion*” (Mark 15:7). Seeing that Jesus took the place of Barabbas, it is reasonable to suspect that the other two men who were crucified with Him were Barabbas’ partners in crime.

While both convicted felons initially participated in the reviling of Jesus (Matthew 27:44), in the course of time one of them seems to have had a change of heart. He said to Jesus, “*Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom*” (Luke 23:42). Simply calling Jesus “Lord” is in itself insufficient (cf. Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46), but the intriguing thing is that he knew about the Lord’s kingdom. Consider the following.

Jesus’ reply to the criminal’s request was as follows: “*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*” (Luke 23:43). The record pretty much speaks for itself. Nevertheless, for some curious reason, this account has been completely removed from its context by certain religionists in an attempt to establish a precedent for salvation devoid of obedience, particularly baptism. The argument typically goes something like this: “The thief on the cross was saved without having been baptized; therefore baptism is not essential to salvation.”

An initial response is the simple fact that the Scriptures clearly teach that baptism is a necessary step in the salvation process (see Acts 2:37-41; 22:16; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:21; etc.), therefore any interpretation that suggests otherwise must be wrong. Furthermore, is it legitimate to confidently affirm that this man had never been baptized? From the biblical evidence, what would be a more reasonable inference?

The man clearly had knowledge of the Lord’s kingdom (Luke 23:42), so how was this knowledge attained? In all four Gospel accounts, of all the words recorded that Jesus spoke from the cross, nothing is said about the kingdom. However, John

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the baptizer had preached, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*” (Matthew 3:2). In response, “*Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins*” (verses 5,6). Further, Jesus Himself had preached, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17). As He proclaimed “*the gospel of the kingdom,*” His influence reached as far north as Syria, and great “*multitudes followed Him — from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan*” (verses 23-25). Not only did baptisms result from His preaching, but they exceeded the numbers of those baptized by John (John 3:22-26; 4:1,2). The Lord’s reach had extended even further by sending out multiplied dozens of His disciples throughout the regions of Galilee and Judea, propagating the same Gospel message (Matthew 9:35–10:7; Luke 10:1-11).

Considering the evidence, can anyone say with full assurance that the man under consideration was definitely never baptized? Admittedly, no one can say for sure either way, even though it is certainly within the realm of plausibility that he was. But an alleged precedent is not a genuine precedent when it is unprovable and even questionable. Notwithstanding deceptive claims to the contrary, at the end of the day it really doesn’t matter, especially when we consider this final point.

Baptism is an integral part of the Christian system, which was not inaugurated prior to the Lord’s death (Matthew 28:18-20; cf. Romans 6:3-5). The baptisms before the cross were preparatory for the approaching kingdom (Matthew 3:1-6; John 3:1–4:2), but not an established component of the preceding Mosaic system. In fact, Christ’s death on the cross was the transitional point between the old and the new (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:15-17). Since Jesus had the power on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10), and the crucified robber was living under the old covenant system of the Jews, and the Lord’s eventual death covered the sins of those living prior to the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15), the account in Luke 23:39-43 is readily explicable and easily harmonizes with the rest of Scripture. Any other interpretation creates unresolvable problems.

Seeing that no one on earth today is in the physical presence of Jesus or is living at a time when the new covenant teachings were not in force, the so-called “thief on the cross” argument is irrelevant. There are numerous examples of conversions recorded in the Book of Acts (inclusive of baptism) that set the precedent. When anything different is asserted by professed Bible-believers, it gives the impression of grasping at straws in order to justify a preconceived idea. “*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 not believe will be condemned’*” (Mark 16:15,16). †

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

Hindrances to Evangelism

Randall Caselman

There is no doubt the New Testament teaches that each and every child of God should be evangelistic.

- There is the direct command: *“Go into all the world, preaching the good news to all creation... Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19).
- We have New Testament examples: *“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went”* (Acts 8:4).
- Evangelism is necessarily the implication: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). If salvation is in none other except Jesus, then we must tell others about Him.

Satan uses so many devices to keep us from being soul-conscious. Our soul-winning efforts will be hindered:

When we decide that souls will be saved without our efforts. We must understand that we are co-workers with God. Paul tells us that we are *“His workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”* (Ephesians 2:10). What greater work does God have for us to do than saving others? *“He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

When we become lukewarm and mechanical in our attempts to promote Jesus. Questions! Do we have any plans for reaching others with the Gospel? Do we have a prayer list of those we are wanting to bring to Jesus? Do they know we are trying to bring them into a personal relationship with God and His people? It would go a long way if we would just say to them, “I love you, and I want you to be saved.” We must be intentional in our efforts to seek and save the lost.

When we decide that winning others is the responsibility of the preacher alone. Note that when the early church was scattered abroad, the

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preachers (apostles) stayed in Jerusalem and the church members were found teaching others wherever they went.

When we turn our attention inward. So many church programs today are geared to our own personal needs rather than our attending to God's business. "*God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son*" (John 3:16). God did not send His Son to meet our personal needs, but to save our souls. Jesus' agenda must become our agenda, "*to seek and save the lost*" (Luke 19:10), "*to call sinners to repentance*" (Matthew 9:13).

When we allow issues to become more important than souls. The first priority of the primitive church was saving the lost. So many of us are so wrapped up in issues that we are blinded to the needs of the lost. Yes, issues are important, but they must not occupy first place to the point that they crowd out our desire to tell others of God's grace. Paul said, "*I came knowing nothing but Jesus and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

When we lose the spirit of brotherly love. Disunity is a deterrent to soul-winning. Jesus said, "*the world will know you are My disciples when you love one another*" (John 13:5). Controversy and competition among local congregations inhibit our soul-winning efforts. Salvation is in Christ, not in the church. The church is a result of our salvation. "*The Lord added to the church daily those being saved*" (Acts 2:47).

When we become self-indulgent. The world is watching; the lost are aware of our morality. We are the only Bible some will ever read. We must become practitioners of pure religion, "*caring for the fatherless and widows and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world*" (James 17). We must become a Christ-like example to those around us. It's not enough for others to see us carry our Bibles to church; we must carry it in our hearts and apply it in our daily walk.

When we are loose in doctrine. Many churches have watered down membership requirements to the point that they demand no discipline, no conviction, no commitment, no conversion, no change in the way we think and act. God expects us to become a "*peculiar people, a royal nation, a holy priesthood, a people set apart for His work*" (1 Peter 2:9).

Give us a watch word for the hour, a thrilling word, a word of power — the watchword is **evangelism**. †

Randall Caselman preaches for the church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

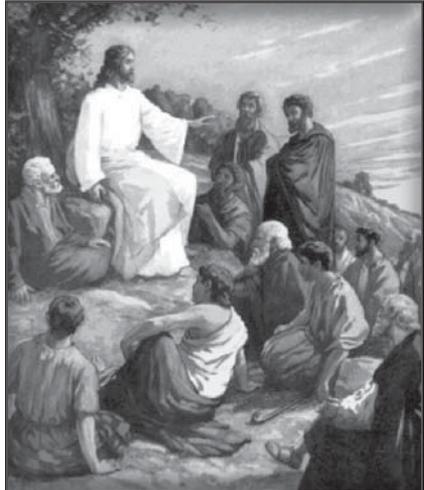
CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

APPLIED EVANGELISM

Dan R. Owen

Evangelism, the proclaiming of the Gospel of Christ, is at the heart of God's will for the church. Unfortunately, the devil is deceiving us in this secular culture into being satisfied with theoretical evangelism. Theoretical evangelism involves evangelistic workshops, classes on evangelism, and video series on how to do evangelism. It involves emotional talks about what we ought to do and why. Theoretical evangelism will not accomplish the will of God. What we need is applied evangelism. In applied evangelism we put the famous NIKE slogan, "Just Do It," into action. We stop talking about fishing for men and start actually fishing for them. Consider applied evangelism from two perspectives.

Evangelism must be applied by the people of the church. Jesus left this world, instructing His followers to go everywhere and proclaim the Gospel. He said, "*This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations and then shall the end come*" (Matthew 24:14). When Jesus ascended into heaven, His followers began at Jerusalem doing applied evangelism. They told people about Jesus, His death, His resurrection, and His Lordship over all people. They told people in homes, on country roads, in synagogues, and in public gathering places. They came right out and told them what Jesus had done, what He was yet to do, and what they needed to do in order to obey Him. This telling involved teaching, explaining, and convincing, as well as encouraging people to obey. The clear objective was to get people to obey the Gospel and to become Christians. The objective was to get people to become members of Christ's church. This is precisely what God calls us to do.



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Evangelism must also be applied by the hearers. Just coming to meetings is not good enough to be accepted by God. Just bringing the kids to Sunday school won't get it done. Just having a group of friends in the church isn't sufficient. Hearers who apply evangelism have a real willingness to listen to the Gospel and consider its personal application. Those who apply evangelism allow the Gospel to convict them about the Lordship of Jesus. Those who apply evangelism allow God to change their thinking, bringing them to repentance. Applied evangelism involves confessing Jesus as Lord of one's life and being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. By doing these things, every individual who applies the Gospel in his/her own life obeys the Gospel and, in so doing, becomes a member of the church of Christ. Applied evangelism, then, means pursuing the observance of Jesus' commands in one's daily life, including the command to share the Gospel with others.

God has richly blessed us, but let us beware, lest we be satisfied with theoretical evangelism. Be assured that the will of God is not accomplished until evangelism is applied by the church and by those with whom the church shares the saving message of Jesus. †

Dan R. Owen preaches for the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

Satisfying the Hungry Soul

Ernest S. Underwood

"For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:9). Do you ever do any daydreaming, wishing for something that you don't have and may never get? I think all of us could agree that we have. Lots of times we wish for things that we really don't need, or would not bring us the happiness we so earnestly desire.

In the Beatitudes Jesus said, *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled"* (Matthew 6:6). This is that satisfying the longing of the soul of which David spoke. The beauty of this area of longing is that even today it can be fulfilled. Peter said, *"As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."* The knowledge of this Word will produce faith, and Peter also stated, *"Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls."* Friends, develop a longing for God's Word. Study it, obey it, and be saved by it. †

Ways to Get Involved in Personal Evangelism

Jimmy Young

Many of us have said, “I am going to get more involved in personal evangelism this year.” This is good because we do see the need and we also understand we are obligated to do so. There is no more important work than sharing the Gospel with others (Acts 8:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). Paul’s statement must be understood, *“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:1,2). Following is a simple plan for getting involved personally in the work of evangelism:

A commitment of time is required. There is a great deal to be said for purposing to do things that need to be done (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:5-8). If you wish to really become serious about becoming active in personal evangelism, the first thing to do is make an honest commitment of time each week to that work! Each of us has 168 hours every week. Two hours a week devoted to evangelism would only be 1.2% of our time. Two-and-a half hours a week would only be 1.5% of our time. If all else fails, we can sacrifice some other activity to make time for this work. On one occasion, Jesus did without a meal while He talked to a woman about her soul (John 4:31-34). I assure you this is a work worth sacrificing many less important things. Whether you prefer to make the commitment in terms of hours a week, evenings a week, or whatever, the critical thing is to follow through.

A notebook is needed. It doesn’t have to be an expensive one. The purpose of the notebook is to keep track of every “prospect” that is within the realm of influence. Entries in this notebook should include names, addresses, phone numbers, dates, and whatever other personal information needs to be remembered to help in teaching various individuals. The names in your notebook will range from very good to those that are only remote possibilities. One thing your notebook will always do is give immediate names of your best contacts at any given time. Never give up on any contact, no matter how uninterested a person may seem to be. The only time you should cross out a name is when that person dies! You see, there is hope as long as there is life. The notebook also furnishes the names of people for whom you need to spend time praying on a regular basis.

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A worksheet is needed. This is needed to write down how much time you have committed to personal evangelism. By this, you will be able to see how much time you actually spent at the end of the week. On it you can list everything you can think of that you could do to better fill the time you have committed to. Be wise and resourceful. You may be wondering what you can do this week that would involve you in some aspect of evangelism. I suggest the following: (a) Pray concerning evangelism. (b) Look (go prospecting) for study contacts. (c) Start a Bible study with a non-Christian or a new convert. (d) Get involved with miscellaneous “seed-sowing” activities.

This can be done by distributing tracts, tapes, study materials, etc. If all else fails, call one of the elders or one of the preachers and ask, “What can I do to help in evangelism?” You will be given enough work to occupy your commitment time. Get on your worksheet all new converts’ names. This is a very important part of evangelism and one we often neglect.

You need a person to account whom you give account. Think about it; you probably will need somebody who will agree to hold you to your commitment. Choose someone with whom you have close contact so that each week you can tell him/her how much time you have actually used in personal evangelism. The ideal arrangement is simply to have someone with whom you have agreed to exchange worksheets. You check on them and they check on you. I suggest you not use your spouse if you are married, for he/she will normally let you off too easily.

Always have some Bible lessons you can teach. Each Christian needs to have a brief introductory lesson he or she can teach on a short notice to anyone who will listen. This lesson serves two purposes: (1) It allows us to have something to teach in situations where we may never have another opportunity to say something to a particular person concerning his/her soul. Our basic lesson can be such that after having taught it, we can feel confident that we have exposed him/her to the Gospel. (2) In addition, a basic lesson gives us a means of finding out whether a person is interested in further study. Each Christian needs to have a series of lessons he or she is able to teach when a more detailed study seems to be appropriate. I suggest you pick up a copy of *Basic Bible Lessons* by O.P. Baird. It contains twenty-three lessons. This will help you in many ways.

Our love for others must go beyond words. We must actually help those “in need” (1 John 3:16-18). There isn’t anything we have that is more needful than the Gospel of Christ! †

Jimmy Young works with the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

Making Evangelism Personal

Rodney Nulph

Evangelism is the lifeblood of the church! If the saved fail to share, sinners will remain separated from the Lord. It is each Christian's responsibility and blessed privilege to share the Gospel with those we meet (Mark 16:15,16). While most Christians understand the Lord's directive, some are guilty by failing to make this directive personal. If evangelism is to be successful, it must be personal! "Go ye, means go me!" Yet, how can the "average" child of God make evangelism personal?

Firstly, evangelism must be a **priority**. It is quite interesting to note that just prior to our Lord's ascension and exaltation, He made evangelism a priority for His followers. Teach, baptize and teach some more (Matthew 28:18-20) was the Lord's plea. This edict was to become their daily priority and ours as well. For evangelism to be our priority, it **must** extend past the walls of the meetinghouse! Although congregational evangelism efforts are great and needed (Gospel



meetings, door-knocking, supporting missionaries, et al), they are no substitute

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for personal, individual evangelism. Have you made evangelism personal? Is it an individual priority for you? We must change the often present mentality of “let someone else do it” when it comes to spreading the Lord’s message. Evangelism must be a priority!

Secondly, Evangelism requires a **person**. While the world is certainly our “target” for evangelism (Mark 16:15), it begins with an individual person. Jesus saw individuals (Matthew 4:18). Both Philip and Ananias were directed to individuals (Acts 8:26-28; 9:17ff). Interestingly, God counts by ones; one sheep (Luke 15:3-7), one coin (Luke 15:8-10), and one boy (Luke 15:11-32)! **If our Lord was to return today and ask you the name of the person you are actively seeking for His cause, could you honestly name a person?** Making evangelism personal requires a person!

Thirdly, evangelism necessitates a **plan**. Success in any area of life requires a strategy or plan. Technique is extremely important when it comes to sharing the message of salvation. This plan involves **inspection**. Inspect and evaluate where the person is religiously that you desire to evangelize (Acts 8:30a). This plan also must include **inquiry**. Questions are powerful tools in the evangelist’s arsenal (Acts 8:30b). This plan must also include **instruction**. Sadly, this is where some stop. We often know where our friends and family are religiously through inspection, and we even engage in religious conversations and inquiry with these same ones, but sadly, some fail to complete the process by instructing. Instruction is the final key to evangelism (Acts 8:35).

Could it be that many have neglected the Lord’s directive for evangelism? The Lord’s church will never reach her full capacity until each and every member accepts his/her responsibility in evangelism. Evangelism must be personal! Personal evangelism that pleases the Lord is evangelism that becomes our priority, evangelism that involves a person, and evangelism that involves a plan. May it be said of each Christian that which was said of our Master, He came to “seek and save the lost” (cf. Luke 19:10).

Whom are we seeking?



Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher in Medina, Ohio, USA. He is also the Associate Editor of the monthly Internet magazine, *Gospel Gazette Online*.

If our Lord were to return today and ask you the name of the person you are actively seeking for His cause, could you honestly name a person?

THE LORD IS WITH US

John Gipson

It was a sad time for the churches. Persecution seemed imminent for believers throughout Asia. John already had been seized and banished to the isle of Patmos “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” and no one knew what might come next.

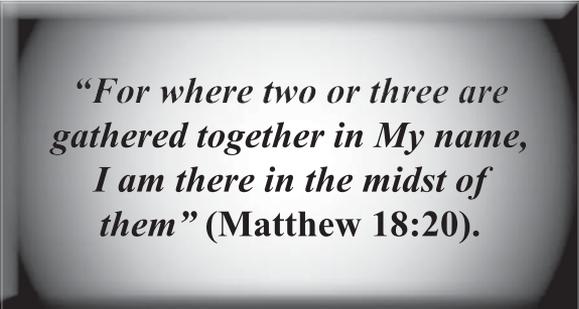
It was the ‘Lord’s Day,’ a day with special meaning for every Christian. This was the day of the week on which the Lord had risen from the dead, appeared to the women and the eleven, the day on which, week after week, Christians met together to break the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Jesus.

John has no opportunity to be in such an assembly today. He is stranded on this isle, the sea separating him from fellow-saints who are now gathering in such places as Ephesus and Smyrna to worship. Physically limited from joining his brethren, he nevertheless can be present in spirit, or have his heart uplifted to the Lord. In this moment he hears behind him a voice like a trumpet blast, saying, “*Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.*”

Turning, John saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands, “*one like a son of man.*” The lampstands were the seven churches. Christ was present, and walking among these churches of Asia! They were not forgotten nor forsaken! Jesus had promised to be with His disciples until the end of the world — and He was there!

Let the churches of the Lord rejoice! He is with us! †

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



“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

WORSHIP



Eager to Leave

Unknown

It was my first time at church. I had never really wanted to go, but a good friend of mine had finally worn me down enough to give it a try. I had always thought, “That church stuff isn’t for me,” or, “I’m a good person. What do I need church for?” or, “All church is good for is making you feel guilty and asking you for money.”

But then, when I finally arrived at the doors, I was greeted by smiling faces and warm welcomes from the regulars. I was expecting more of an attitude of disapproval for an outsider, but no one was like that. When services finally began, I sat and listened to the people singing. I didn’t know any of the songs myself, so I just took it all in. There were several people with beautiful voices, and there were those who hadn’t hit one note right from start to finish. Those people sang with even more feeling, though, and all I could do was smile at their obvious love of the songs. There were a few things I didn’t understand in the lyrics. After all, I had never really been taught anything about God.

What really got me curious, though, was the sermon. The preacher started talking about this Jesus character. I knew who Jesus was supposed to be, but I

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had never really considered what He had done. The preacher read a lot out of the Bible, using it as his main reference. It surprised me to hear the words he read, telling a somewhat graphic story of this one man's abuse and execution. The sermon went on for a while, but I never once looked at my watch. I was so intent on what the preacher was saying about sin and sacrifice that it only felt like a moment had passed by the time he was getting to the heart of his lesson. "Now is the time to act," he said passionately. "Now is the time to lay aside your sin and take up the cross and follow Jesus." He went on and talked about baptism and how it was a step on the way to salvation. It seemed too easy, but he had my attention. I wanted to know more.

"If you are not a Christian yet and we can help you in any way," he began, but as he began to say these words, the folks all around me started packing away their things. The rustle of papers and movement of people slipping on their jackets was distracting. The preacher was still talking, inviting anyone who had a need or a desire to learn more — as I did — to come forward and make that need known, and they would help and pray for that person. But everyone seemed like they wanted to leave, like they had something important that they couldn't be late for, some pressing appointment that they needed to hurry to as soon as things were done here. They were all getting ready for the next song that they knew was coming, flipping through pages and moving around in their seats. I didn't want to hold these people up just because I was ignorant of what they already knew, just because I wanted to learn.

So when he said, "Come now, as we stand and sing," I stayed where I was. I didn't go forward, though I felt the pull strongly. I didn't want to be a hindrance to these people, to keep them here longer just because of me. I stayed put and let the moment pass by. When the service was over, people started talking and filing out through the doors to go home or go out to get something to eat. A few stopped to talk to me, but I tried not to delay them. I kept my answers short and let them go on their way.

Maybe this "salvation" thing wasn't as urgent as the preacher had made it sound. Maybe I didn't need to do anything about this sin he had talked about. I had been fine so far, after all. Life would go on whether I went forward or not.

So, when I left and went back home, I went back to the way things were. If the people who always went to church didn't think that going forward was that important, then why should I? I didn't really know anything about God anyway. It obviously wasn't that serious. †

*This
World Is
Not My
Home!*

Bonnie Rush more

Occasionally, Louis and I are approached by church leaders with concerns that the members for whom they are responsible do not appear to be studying

their Bibles or serving God as they ought. These elders are looking for Bible class material to motivate the members, or programs that will encourage the members to become more involved in the Lord's work. They are concerned about the spiritual health of the flock over which God expects them to watch (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2). They are looking for advice and help to lead Christians on their journey to heaven.

As I ponder their concerns, I must admit I do not have a solution as to how to motivate Christians to be active servants of our Lord, but I believe I know the root of the problem. We, especially in America, have forgotten that this earth is not our home. **We are just pilgrims passing through!** When we convince Christians that our lives on earth are temporary, that heaven awaits those who faithfully serve Our Lord and Master, then Christians will put God first in their lives! The difficulty elders face is convincing Christians of this fact.

Perhaps, we need more Bible-centered lessons from the pulpit and in the Bible class — lessons on Bible characters such as Enoch who walked with God and did not suffer physical death (Genesis 5:24). Enoch certainly was a man who understood God first and enjoyed spending time with our Lord.



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Abraham realized that our lives on earth are temporary, and he willingly left his home in Ur of Chaldees to travel throughout the promised land with no place to call his own. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob acknowledged that they were “*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*” (Hebrews 11:8-16). Christians should follow the example of these men and focus on our home in heaven rather than focusing on our possessions on earth.

Lessons on the life of Peter can encourage one to be faithful to God. Peter was not perfect — the Scriptures show his shortcomings as well as his strengths. When we see that even God’s faithful servants had moments of failure, we can use their examples to help us to understand that we can overcome our sins.

Maybe lessons on the wonders and glory of heaven compared to our home on earth will help Christians overcome their infatuation with earthly possessions. Jesus stated, “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matthew 6:19-21). Our focus and attention concentrate on what is most important to us. **If our earthly possessions are more important to us than our service to God, God will have second place in our hearts.**

One of the ways we worship our Lord is through song. Maybe we should pay attention to the words of the songs we sing and sing them only if we mean what they say. Consider the words from the following songs:

“Earth holds no treasures but perishes with using,
However precious they be;
Yet there’s a country to which I am going,
Heaven holds all to me.” — *Heaven Holds All to Me*

“Here we are but straying pilgrims;
Here our path is often dim;
But to cheer us on our journey,
Still we sing this wayside hymn.” — *Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims*

“I am a stranger here, within a foreign land;
My home is far away upon a golden strand;
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea,
I’m here on business for my King.” — *I Am a Stranger Here*

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“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where My Possessions Lie” — *I Am Bound for the Promised Land*

These are considered older songs, and many congregations pass over them for more popular newer ones. Perhaps, the members no longer believe these words and do not wish to be reminded that our time on earth is only temporary.

I believe the answer to every member of the Lord’s church being an active servant of God is each Christian realizing that life on Earth is only temporary — that we are pilgrims traveling toward a heavenly reward. When we remove the attitude of the importance earthly possessions — elaborate home, fancy car, chic clothes, etc. — and focus on an attitude of pilgrims just passing through, then we will focus on serving our God and not attaining and caring for our earthly possessions.

Most Christians will say, “I love God and He is first in my life.” However **our actions speak louder than words**. Are your actions showing that school grades, school activities, sports, work, recreation, and possessions are more important than spiritual things? Do you forsake the assembly for these activities? Do you fail to study your Bible because other time-consuming “work” is first on your to-do list? Do you excuse yourself from serving God because these things take precedence in your schedule?

I know that sometimes work and other activities interfere with serving our God, but what is your *attitude* when you must miss worship and service activities because of work? Making good grades is important to a good education and a good job, but when God is first in our lives, we will manage our time so that we are at Bible class and worship, and we will complete our classroom assignments, too. When parents have God first in their lives, they will train their children from birth onward that God is first — Bible class, worship, service opportunities — and the children know they will not participate in school activities and sports that interfere with serving and worshipping God.

Where is your heart? What do your actions show? †

Bonnie Rushmore is a staff writer for the *The Voice of Truth International* as well as the layout person. She and her husband live in Winona, MS, USA where they and others cooperate to help perpetuate the long-standing missionary work of the late J.C. Choate.

MODESTY

Samuel A. Matthews

Each day most Americans get up, look in their clothes closet and ask, “What am I going to wear today?” Our answer should depend on: 1) what we plan to do that day, 2) what the weather is like, and 3) the modesty factor. Men and women in America and the world are confused and have a serious problem with regard to the way we clothe ourselves. Sexually provocative dress is the way of the day! People are no longer embarrassed or feel any shame about the exposure of their body; in fact we are encouraged to put it on display. Like in the days of Jeremiah, people of our world don’t know how to blush (Jeremiah 6:15). But Christians have been called out of the world, to live lives that are different from the world (1 John 2:15). We should no longer be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2).

Unfortunately, the lack of modesty has crept into the lives of Christians, and thereby into the church. Some men do not want to walk through the congregation serving the Lord’s Supper due to the provocative dress of some of the sisters. Others are fearful of teaching a teen class due to the undress of many of the young girls. Please don’t become angry or feel insulted as we frankly speak on this subject. The truth must be taught in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Men and women walking around in public with immodest attire are committing sin. They are corrupting the sexual impulses God has placed in mankind for drawing husband and wives together. Some women (and especially young girls) may be unaware, but they are still distorting sex as God designed it. In view of the husband and wife relationship, God made men to be sexually attracted to women (Genesis 2:24). Husbands are to rejoice with their wife and be satisfied by her body (Proverbs 5:18,19). But when a man looks lustfully at a woman who is not his wife he sins by committing adultery in his heart (Matthew 5:28). Job made a covenant with his eyes NOT to look lustfully on a young woman (Job 31:1). Because of our natural sexual attraction to the opposite sex and because of the way many men and women dress, we are at times tempted to sin in our hearts.

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This matter of properly clothing ourselves in public is a confusing subject. Below are three guidelines to consider for helping us know how to dress ourselves.

1. GOD'S LAW — Some who believe the Bible has nothing to say concerning modesty are misinformed. Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed before they ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:25). Like infants, they were unaware of their nakedness, innocent. After eating the fruit, they became aware and tried to cover their loins or hip area (Genesis 3:7). They didn't cover enough, however, so God made them robes to cover their shoulders down to their knees (Genesis 3:21). Remember, wearing only the fig leaves, Adam tried to hide from God because he knew he was still naked (Genesis 3:10,11). God's Old Testament priests were to wear trousers that covered the hips down to the knees (Exodus 28:40-42). These passages teach that God considers one to be naked when the thighs are uncovered.

In 1 Timothy 2:9,10 there are three words that speak to this subject:

Modest — orderly, well arranged, decent; to dress in such a way as NOT to draw undue attention to yourself. This may include “over dressing” (too much make-up, jewelry; flashy clothes, etc.), but it can also include “under-dressing” (wearing too little, or too tight, too low, too short, too thin, or too revealing).

Shamefacedness — having a sense of shame, modesty, the demeanor of women in the church; that which is proper for women professing godliness. In Titus 2:4,5, the older women are commanded to teach the younger women to be chaste (pure from carnality, modest, perfect, and innocent).

Sobriety — habitual moderation, sedateness, gravity.

Putting these definitions together gives us this picture: A godly woman is to dress in such a way as to NOT draw undue attention to herself or her body. She should have a sense of shame or modesty about herself. She should be innocent and pure from carnality. She should dress as a woman whose most important thing in life is to be pleasing to God. Our modern day public swim, sport, lounge and party wear does not fit this definition. Can you really please God when you are dressed in revealing clothing?



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Loved ones, we need to properly cloth ourselves! But how? Bikinis, short shorts, blouses that don't cover the midriff, cheer leading uniforms, much of our sport wear, and form-fitting clothes should be put far away from Christians. Sporting events, weddings, neither the beach, hot weather nor other activities are able to transform immodest dress into modest dress. These things do apply to men as well as women. But most Bible passages/principles dealing with modesty are referencing women, while those concerning lust apply to men.

2. OTHER PEOPLE — We should think about the affect our dress will have on others as we decide what to wear to cover our bodies. A Christian should never want to do anything that could cause someone to sin. Our dress or undress could surely become a stumbling block to lead others into sin (Matthew 5:28). Our modern day fashions (short skirts, low tops, and bare skin) are meant for one thing: to seduce men! Is that your goal as a Christian woman? The Bible teaches that it is a terrible thing for a person to cause others to sin (Luke 17:1). Surveys have shown that male teachers and male students in high school and even middle school are the targets of much temptation from the dress of the young ladies who walk the halls and attend the classes. The uniforms in schools help, but females can also wear them in overly provocative ways.

Statistics show that many women don't understand the problems caused by their immodest dress. The many female body parts, especially the legs and thighs that are exposed by certain apparel can arouse the emotions of every normal warm-blooded male. Loved ones, the way we dress does affect those around us! Think about King David as he walked on his roof and looked down and saw beautiful Bathsheba bathing. His emotions were aflame to the point that he called for her and committed adultery (2 Samuel 11). Still, with all this evidence, some will say, "It does not matter how I dress; the person doing the lusting is the one sinning." If that's the case, then you should be able to walk around nude without sinning.

The following statement should be shouted from the highest mountain top:

Dear sisters, on behalf of and for the benefit of men who are seeking to live in accordance with the will of God, and to keep themselves pure and holy, to the end that you do not encourage them to lust, and for your own eternal welfare, please do not call undue attention to yourself or expose yourself by wearing immodest apparel.

Godly men do not want to see your thighs (or more) in clothing that is too short, your cleavage in tops that are too low, your navels in blouses that are too short, your undergarments through clothing

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that is too thin, or the curves and characteristics of your body in clothing that is too tight.

Please look in the mirror at yourself (front and back) and ask yourself if your attire is becoming of one professing godliness. You may need to make some changes.

3. THE CHURCH OF OUR LORD is the third thing we should consider as we decide how to cover ourselves. Christians are the Lord's body, and the way we present ourselves in dress and all other areas of life reflects on the precious church of Christ. Christians are walking Bibles, read by all men (2 Corinthians 3:2). We are to be "holy people", even as God, our Father, is holy (1 Peter 1:15,16). Our minds must be set on things above, not on things of the earth (Romans 12:2). Yes, we might teach the truth on all doctrinal matters (worship, salvation, baptism, etc.), but if we show by our conduct or dress that we are just like the world, how is the church going to be viewed? The church of our Lord is to be a glorious church, having no spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:25-27).

We will conclude by emphasizing a few FALSE ideas about immodest dress.

1. "Immodest dress is acceptable if you are involved in a sporting event." It is acceptable in the privacy of the marriage relationship to see each other in various stages of undress. That's true because the wife's body belongs to the husband and the husband's body belongs to the wife (1 Corinthians 7:4). But where is this teaching found in reference to track, tennis, or cheer leading?

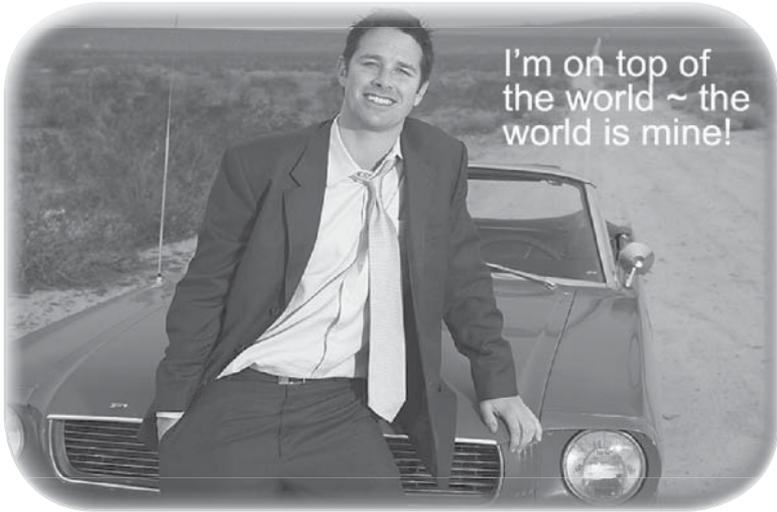
2. "People really are not paying attention to the undress of our society because everybody is doing it." Yes, people are paying attention, and no, everyone is *not* doing it.

3. "My daughter is just a child; certainly she is not the object of lust!" This may be true in your eyes, but not necessarily true in the eyes of others who are looking at her. Daddies, you need to take the lead in this situation and speak to your daughters about the effect their undress can have on the boys and men in their school. Husbands, you need to speak to your wife when you notice that she is dressing in a provocative way.

The number one consideration as to the way we cover ourselves is not the style of the day, or if this outfit is cool, comfortable and part of the latest fad. The number one consideration is whether or not our dress is godly! Nothing else will matter in eternity. (Men, the same principles apply to you for the sake of our ladies.) †

Samuel A. Matthews is a preacher of the Gospel living in the Virgin Islands, and working with the Lord's church in the city of St. Thomas.

When Pride Rules: Esther 3:5



Jimmy Clark

“When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath” (Esther 3:5). The man Haman is a study in pride. Mordecai wounded his pride by not compromising his Jewish convictions. Mordecai told those who questioned him about his contrasting behavior that *“he was a Jew”* (Esther 3:4). Haman said to the king concerning the Jewish people, *“...their laws are different from all other people’s”* (Esther 3:8). Evidently, bowing to Haman would be equal to worshipping him, and thus contrary to the will of God. Mordecai did not live a life of defying civil government, for he was instrumental in saving the king’s life (cf. Esther 2:21-23). The path of the life of Haman leads to a sad conclusion. Haman’s wounded pride would lead to his own death (cf. Esther 7:9-10). Solomon wrote, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18). Consider three thoughts about pride ruling.

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1. When Pride Rules, Perceptions Are Skewed.

It is written, *“When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus — the people of Mordecai”* (Esther 3:5,6). When Haman saw Mordecai, he saw the Jewish nation. He never investigated the record of Mordecai’s noble deed to the king. He saw the whole scene as an affront to his position and power. Jesus



knew what perspective the wounded pride of the Pharisees would bring. *“Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch”* (Matthew 15:13,14). If the eye is diseased, the whole body is blind (cf. Matthew 6:22,23).

2. When Pride Rules, Policies Are Self-Serving. Haman said to King Ahasuerus, *“There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries”* (Esther 3:8,9). Haman would seek to do to the Jews what Jezebel did to Naboth. Pride can only serve one master — self. He would seek to use the king to get his own way.

3. When Pride Rules, People Suffer. Mordecai saw the truth of Haman’s work and turned to the providential work of God (cf. Esther 4:13,14). The emotional, mental, and spiritual suffering of the Jews would be nothing compared to the end of Haman, his household, and his host of supporters throughout the empire (cf. Esther 9:1-17). What Haman thought would be a day of triumph was tragedy for himself and for many other people. Solomon wrote, *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan”* (Proverbs 29:2). All in any type of authority need to give heed to the lessons taught from of old. †



Jimmy Clark preaches for the Bethel Church of Christ in Athens, Alabama, USA.

“Thank God for Abortion!”

Steve Higginbotham

Yes, these are the actual words spoken by MSNBC host, Toure Neblett. Toure gave thanks to God and country for having the “safety net” of abortion to “save him”. The public nature of this statement, and the lack of any shame is mind-boggling to me. What kind of a man sacrifices the life of a baby — his own baby — to save his own? This wasn’t even an action done to “save” his own life as he stated, but rather to preserve a lifestyle he felt was more valuable than the life of his own child.

Oh, I’m not done. In writing for Salon.com, Mary Elizabeth Williams wrote an article under the heading and subheading of, “So what if abortion ends life? I believe that life starts at conception, and it’s never stopped me from being pro-choice.” In this article Miss Williams unashamedly affirms that life begins at conception and that it is foolish to pretend otherwise. She argued that to be relieved over an abortion but grieved over a miscarriage is understandable, but to argue that what was growing inside of the mother wasn’t the same is foolish. Life isn’t determined by the intent of the mother. She went so far as to affirm that a fetus is indeed a life, but it is “a life worth sacrificing”.

What this man and this woman demonstrated for us is that we have two entirely different worldviews. There was a time when the “pro-abortion” side felt the need to vainly argue that what was growing in the mother was not yet a “human life”. That’s because a “Christian worldview” could never condone the taking of an innocent life. Their pro-abortion cause would fail.

However, over the past 40 years since *Roe v. Wade*, our society’s worldview has changed. We live in a post-Christian culture. Today, the majority of Americans have a “secular worldview”, so much so that, now, those who are pro-abortion no longer feel the need to “pretend” the baby in the womb is not really “human life”. They now freely admit it is, but it’s “life worth sacrificing”.

Christians in the 21st century find themselves in the same situation as the Christians of the 1st century. We are the modern “diaspora”; scattered and dispersed among a secular, humanistic culture. If ever God needed a “distinctive people, with a distinctive plea”, it’s now. In my stronger moments, I want to “call for battle” and “rally the troops”, but in my weaker moments, I must admit that sometimes I pray as did the apostle John, “*Lord, come quickly*” (Revelation 22:20). What do you think? †

Steve Higginbotham preaches for the Karns church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

Cooperation or Contention?

Unknown

Ephesians 4:16: *“From whom the whole body fitly joined and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”*

God has always required that His people be united (I Corinthians 1:12; 12:12). He knows that life has its difficulties and we all have our faith tried from time to time. The Hebrews writer made clear the understanding our Lord has concerning life’s difficulties. *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15).

James also emphasized the certainty of our trials. *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience”* (James 1:2-3).

Yes, we will find ourselves facing hard times. How will we endure and ex-

perience joy in those hardships? Must we weather life’s storms alone? Do we not think that unity, or cooperation, one with another will help tremendously in this endeavor? Amos wrote, *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”*



(Amos 3:3). We must strive to be on the same page with our brothers and sisters, doctrinally, and to work to develop an attitude of cooperation.

The early church sets forth a good example for cooperation. God’s overall plan is that all men be saved (Luke

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

14:23, John 3:15-17, 1 Timothy 2:4, Titus 2:11, 2 Peter 3:9). The saved are those whom God adds to His church. *“Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47). Are we to assume that the Lord’s church in the first century grew in such an explosive manner (Acts 2:41; 4:4) without Christians cooperating one with another? In fact, due to the great distress the early church experienced, Christians often sold their possessions and distributed them to others in their spiritual family who had needs (Acts 2:45; 4:34-37; 11:29).

Of course, the first century Christians cooperated not only with regard to their physical possessions, they also took to heart God’s message to go into all the world with the message of Christ (Matthew 28:19,20; Romans 1:16). Peter was given three visions from God, emphasizing the need of the Gentiles for the Gospel (Acts 10:9-48). The Roman soldier, Cornelius, was a good man who did good things, but he was lost in sin. If not, why would Peter have commanded him to be baptized (Acts 10:48)? Scriptural baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16), and all men everywhere of all time are in need of that saving message. The Jews of Peter’s day would not have been eager to show any concern for the Gentiles of the world, but the example of Cornelius teaches us that we are to be willing to submit our

own thoughts, desires, and cooperation to the Lord and His will.

Cooperation is needed to maintain the peaceable life with everyone around us, but an amiable working relationship will not always be easy. In fact, Paul said, *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”* (Romans 12:18). We realize that it is not possible, biblically speaking, to cooperate with some people because of their actions, their attitudes, and even their beliefs. We are warned, *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”* (Ephesians 5:11). The apostle John said clearly, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds”* (2 John 1:9-11).

May God help us to be cooperative, not contentious. After all, when we choose to be contentious, we only end up hurting ourselves, and we fail to follow God’s plan for man (Psalm 119:105; Romans 12:1,2). †

**God has always
required that His
people be united!**



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Christians Are in the World But Not of the World

Paula Bates

1. I do not _____ that you (God the Father) should take them out of the _____, but that You should keep them from the _____ one. John 17:15
2. Behold I send you out as _____ in the midst of _____. Therefore be wise as _____ and harmless as _____. Matthew 10:16
3. And Jesus _____ and said to them. Render to _____ the things that are _____ and to God the things that are God's. And they all marveled at Him. Mark 12:17
4. If you were of the _____, the world would _____ its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world _____ you. John 15:19
5. No one can serve two _____; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be _____ to the one and _____ the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24
6. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even _____, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is _____, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their _____ who set their mind on earthly things. For our _____ is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:18-20

-
1. Pray, world, evil
 2. Sheep, wolves, serpents,
 3. Answered, Caesar, Caesar's
 4. World, love, hates
 5. Masters, loyal, despise
 6. Weeping, destruction, shame, citizenship

Six Characteristics of a Strong Father

Keith Parker

There is a revival going on in America. Among men. More men are saying, “Hey, I want to be a better husband and father,” or “I want to be the spiritual leader in my home.” Let me share with you six characteristics of a strong father.

First, he is committed to his family. His job is not first. His hobbies and interests are not number one. Sports are not at the top of the list. With the exception of God, his family is at the very top. He realizes that the most important things in this life are not things...they’re relationships.

Second, he spends time with his wife and kids. Time with the family is like oxygen — there’s a minimum that’s necessary for survival. It may be a date with his wife or an overnight trip with one of his kids, but his presence is felt.

Third, he solves problems in crisis. Satan attacks families in many ways. Perhaps through an illness. A loss of a job. A transfer. Bad grades. Death. A kid in trouble with the law. Problems arise. And in the midst of trouble, strong fathers recognize the strength of their Heavenly Father (Matthew 7:7-11).

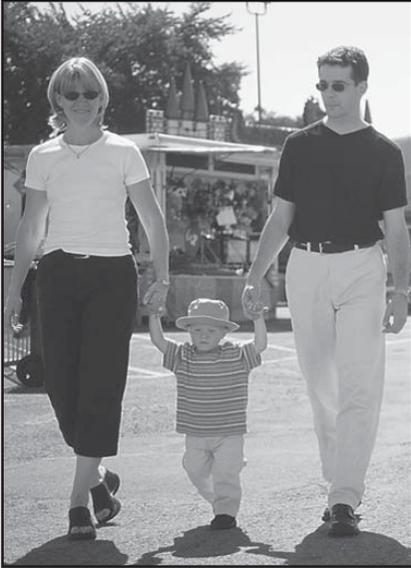
Fourth, he is the spiritual leader at home. He knows what Paul said in Ephesians 6:4, “*And, ye fathers...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” He applies the instruction of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:5-7: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.*”

Fifth, he expresses appreciation. He counts his blessings. He develops the attitude of gratitude. He is grateful for the love, joy, and peace that reign in his home.

Sixth, he practices good communication. He is more positive than negative. He spends more time building than blasting. He is as James instructed, “*swift to hear and slow to speak*” (James 1:19).

Joshua on one occasion said, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15). What about it, fathers? Is that true in your house? †

Keith Parker works with the Lord’s church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.



What Is the #1 Duty of Parents?

Travis L. Quertermous

Most parents want their children to succeed. Oftentimes, they will say they want their children to have more than they did. Parents that grew up poor understandably want their children to have a better life growing up than they did. To that end, parents will often work long hours and sacrifice, to give their children a good life and pay for a good education.

But is that the top priority parents should have for their children? Have

we done our job in God's eyes if they graduate at the top of their class from a prestigious university or if they become professional athletes? Not necessarily! Listen to Moses as he talked to Israelite parents in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*"

Clearly, then, God's top priority for parents is for them to love God above all things, know His Word, and faithfully teach the Bible to their children. This is so the whole family can go to heaven together! **If we miss out on heaven, will anything else really matter?** Jesus Christ asked, "*For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26). †

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

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Changes

Dale Grissom

Children growing up in the 30's and 40's were not exposed to many of the evils that our young people face daily. They never heard of people living together outside of wedlock. They were not taught that fornication and adultery were normal life styles, or that homosexuality was an acceptable "alternative" lifestyle. Now many young people, many of them children who have not yet reached their teenage years, have drug and alcohol problems. It is not unusual to hear or read of children who have been killed by another child. Not only are the lives of these children ruined by the terrible things they have done, but the consequences of their sins live on.

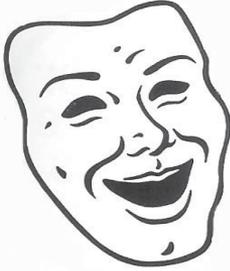
Prior to World War II most families lived on farms. The husband worked to support the family, and the mother stayed home and raised the children. Together they made the decisions that affected their family. Children growing up in that time lived entirely different lifestyles from those of today. Most were kept busy working in the fields, doing chores around the farm, going to school, attending church, and engaging in activities that lent peace and contentment to their lives. Homes were stable; few one-parent homes existed, and those that did were generally as a result of death. Divorce was rare and shocking to the community.

Following World War II changes began to take place in the behavior of our society. People got caught up in a rush to obtain material things, as if treasure on earth had become their god. Both parents began working outside the home just to make ends meet, and nerves became stretched to the breaking point from trying to keep up. Children began arriving from school to houses where no one was home.

And we wonder what's happened to our families and to our nation. We are shocked at the decline of the morals and values in our society. Even the church is undergoing change and facing issues we would never have dreamed of a few years ago. God would not have it to be thus; He has given all we need. Only by trusting in Him, studying and obeying His Word, and putting His principles into practice will we find true contentment in this life. †

Dale Grissom works with the Lord's church in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



“The car won’t start,” said a wife to her husband. “I think there’s water in the carburetor.”

“How do you know?” said the husband scornfully. “You don’t even know what the carburetor is.”

“I’m telling you,” repeated the wife, “I’m sure there’s water in the carburetor.”

“We’ll see,” mocked the husband. “Let me check it out. Where’s the car?”

“In the swimming pool.”



Bubba and Jimmy Joe were walking down the street in Atlanta, and they saw a sign on a store which read, “Suits \$5.00 each, shirts \$2.00 each, trousers \$2.50 each.”

Bubba was smarter than Jimmy Joe, and he said, “Hey, Jimmy Joe, look here! You and me could buy a whole gob of these, take ’em back home, sell ’em to our friends, and make a fortune!”

“Now, Jimmy Joe, you just let me do the talkin’, ’cause if they hear your

accent, they might think we’re ignorant and won’t wanna sell that stuff to us. Now, I’ll just talk in a slow Georgia drawl so’s they don’t know we is from Alabama.”

Well, they went in and Bubba used his best fake Georgia drawl and said, “I’ll take 50 of them suits at \$5.00 each, 100 of them there shirts at \$2.00 each, 50 pairs of them there trousers at \$2.50 each. I’ll just back up my pickup and ...”

The owner of the shop interrupted, “Y’all from South Alabama, ain’t ya?”

“Well...yeah,” said a surprised Bubba... “How come you knowed that?”

“Because this is a dry cleaners.”



Some folks are just naturally tactful and considerate. A good example is the office supervisor who called a secretary into his office on Friday afternoon to give her the bad news that she was being fired. He started the conversation by saying, “Miss Jones, I really don’t know how we’re going to get along without you, but starting Monday, we’re going to try.”



Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me, I want people to know why I look this way. I’ve traveled a long way and some of the roads weren’t paved!

PROVERBS 17:22

My good friend Bill considers himself to be really good at communicating, and he says that the best way to communicate with a fish is to drop it a line.



The boss joined a group of workers at the coffee urn and told a series of jokes he'd heard recently. Everybody laughed loudly. Everybody, that is, except Mike.

"What's the matter, Mike?" asked the boss. "No sense of humor?"

"My sense of humor is fine," he said. "But I don't have to laugh. I'm quitting tomorrow."



A husband and wife drove several miles down a country road, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument, and neither wanted to concede their position. As they passed a barnyard of mules and pigs, the wife sarcastically asked, "Relatives of yours?"

"Yep," the husband replied. "In-laws."



A penny saved is a government oversight.

It isn't often that my wife complains, but there was this time she was having an old-fashioned "heart-to-heart" with me. She said, "Hon, you never listen to me. Every time I try to talk to you, you get this faraway look in your eyes after only a few seconds. Please promise me that you'll try to work on that."

The last thing I remember was replying, "I'm sorry, what was that you were saying?"



One of the good ol' boys down at the coffee shop was complaining this morning about not being able to remember things as well as he used to. He told us that he couldn't quite remember how to throw a boomerang, but that it eventually came back to him.



Did you ever notice that when you put the two words "The" and "IRS" to-



gether, it spells "Theirs....."

Just a little info for those of you who are 40, or soon to be — the Roman Numerals for 40 are "XL."

Looking for a Sign

Jeremy W. Barrier

Since the time I was a child, I have loved being told the story of Jonah. What is not to like in this account: big storms at sea, sailors navigating treacherous waters, a large fish swallowing a human, massive cities with armies, and last but not least, a worm that eats Jonah's vine! It was great material that was firmly entrenched into my mind. However, years later as an adult, I began to look at Jonah again, and I was amazed at what I saw. Here, this interestingly written text in the middle of the Minor Prophets was speaking to me as an adult. I began to see the text anew, not as a child, but reading an ingeniously inspired and weighty text from God that was attacking the foundations of my soul! As a child, I would look at Jonah and say, "Silly Jonah, why are you always running from God? Don't you see what God is doing?" Maybe I did not understand the real plight of Jonah very well. As I looked closer I began to see an intricately woven text about God's judgment, His salvation and mercy, and ultimately God's invitation for me to respond to Him.

I began to read, and read slowly, and it became apparent to me that the four chapters of Jonah were written with symmetry and order. Chapter One is just like Chapter Three, while Chapter Two is just like Chapter Four! As one example out of many, compare the two texts, Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:1-2:

1 *"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*

2 *'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.'*

3 *"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."*

1 *"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,*

2 *'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.'*

3 *"So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh According to the Word of the LORD."*

I was completely amazed to notice that the texts were mirror images of each other, except for the fact that in the first passage Jonah is going 180 degrees in the opposite direction that God told him to go, and thus he was fleeing from God's

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will... from God's face! Why would Jonah do this? As I considered this dilemma, it occurred to me that Jonah must have been hesitant to go to a city, especially Nineveh, that was known for excessive cruelty through such terrifying, military



practices as crucifixion, impalement, and the flaying of their enemies bodies! Would you have wanted to go to Nineveh? I doubt it.

Yet, the story doesn't stop there. As I looked closely, I realized that Chapter One is telling the reader about the journey of faith of the sailors on the ship as they came to realize that Jonah was pointing the way to the living God, Jehovah.

Jonah was *defying* God, yet he possessed the *saving knowledge* of God.

Chapter Two shows us the repentance of Jonah and his subsequent salvation through the fish.

Chapter Three (mirroring Chapter One) then tells us about the salvation of Nineveh, and how the city came to a knowledge of the true God, this time by Jonah teaching them the truth willingly.

Finally, Chapter Four (mirroring Chapter Two) brings us back to the person of Jonah, and once again we see the hesitant Jonah being forced into a decision: "Will I repent and see the salvation of God in my life too, or will I continue to fight Him and His will?" Jonah had a problem. He couldn't see the forest for the trees. The scheme of God's plan was so much grander than Jonah had ever imagined! Here Jonah had an opportunity to cry out from the hilltops, "*Salvation belongs to the Lord...repent, for the reign of my King, the Almighty, is at hand...*" and so forth, but no, he wanted it his way.

But I can't be too hard on Jonah. After all, I have to remind myself of my feelings as I watched the twin towers in New York City collapsing to the ground. During that fall of 2001, my unborn son, still in the womb of my pregnant spouse, would be delivered in just two months, and I feared for the world that he would see. After watching the towers drop, I then watched as the United States government searched diligently for the culprits responsible for this horrendous act of

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terrorism. Finally, they found a man to be blamed. I was shocked as I listened to him say proudly from the witness stand that he was happy as he watched the thousands meet their death on that day! I must admit, I felt nothing but anger and a desire to see justice brought down upon this man. At this critical point, did I desire mercy and salvation? No, but God's message to Jonah suggests that it was not Jonah's duty to execute justice, but rather to appeal to Nineveh to turn to God. Is my job any different today?

It was no different either for Jesus. In Matthew 12:37,38 we find Jesus being approached by the scribes and Pharisees, and He is asked, "*Teacher, we want to see a sign from You. But He answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*" Some things just never seem to change. We just can't seem to see clearly! God resurrected people from death to life, and yet we lack the motivation to fall before the Face of the Almighty and acknowledge that we need to repent; see the value of His great mercy for us and for our neighbors; and finally be willing to go tell every person we see what God has *done for us all*. Our vision is just too small.

God said to Jonah, "*Go...*" and Jesus said to His disciples, "*Go...*" (Matthew 28:18-20). Could the signs be any more obvious that God desires for us to be His emissaries of mercy? He sends a massive storm, a giant fish that swallows Jonah, shows him complete repentance of the entire city, and yet Jonah still can't see clearly? I laugh inside as I hear Jesus tell these scribes and Pharisees that they will receive only the sign of Jonah. *Only* the sign of Jonah? Isn't this like the guy who stands in the midst of the massive rainstorm, and looks at you and says, "I think it is going to rain today"? Could anything have been more obvious than a sign from Jonah, especially when it was resurrection from the dead? Once again, we are blinded to the forest because of the trees.

Now that I have become a man, I read Jonah and I marvel at God's wisdom. I am so thankful for the inspired Word of God! I am so thankful for Jonah! I have to admit that I loved Jonah and the fish as a child, but I think I love Jonah even more now, knowing what it says about God and His salvation. I must admit, I felt a deep sense of joy the first time I had the opportunity to tell my children of Jonah and to watch as their eyes lit up as each detail unfolded in their minds as it did in mine years ago. **I think my eyes are still lit, and the message of Jonah is still unfolding in my life.** †

Jeremy W. Barrier is a missions evangelist and teaches Bible at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, USA.

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Why Do You Marvel at This?

Jim Poland

People marvel at the miracles of the Bible. Miracles either become our proof of the Bible message being from God, or they become a stumbling block to those who want to doubt it. For those who want apostolic power today, miracles become mystical and misleading.

Some people stumble over the miracles in disbelief. They see them as myths from men's imaginations and being deluded. They put the Bible in the same category as mythical writings of pagan gods and religions from men. Therefore, to them, the Bible is not truth from God, but just fictional writings of men at best and harmful distortions. They see them as deceptions and lies that lead to superstitions which ruin society and people's lives.

Then, there are people who stumble over the miracles of the Bible, claiming that they today have the power to perform miracles. But miraculous powers were given only to the apostles of Christ and to those upon whom they laid their hands (Acts 8:14-17). The purpose of the miracles of the first century was to confirm the Word, the Bible (Mark 16:20). These miraculous powers have now ceased, as the Bible affirmed that they would (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

As wonderful, amazing, supernatural, and necessary as they were, we should not marvel to the point of unbelief at the miracles. They are not incredible, nor are they from the apostles' own powers or goodness.

The miracles of the Bible are different from man's ability, and different from the so-called miracles of today. Bible miracles were from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had brought about His will and His salvation through those whom He chose and the way He chose. What He promised to Abraham, He brought about in His own way at His own time from His own purpose for our salvation. Those all work together to bring us to Christ, His Servant. God glorified what men denied, and they delivered Him to Pilate for crucifixion, even when Pilate could find nothing wrong with Him.

Men denied the Holy One and Just One and accepted a murderer. Many today deny Jesus and His instructions so they can have things their own way. They deny Jesus' sanctity of life so they can abort the unwanted, unborn babies. Many deny Jesus' instructions so they can have their own way in marriage and the divorce courts. Many deny His church for men's churches. Many deny His Word, the Bible, for the philosophies and so-called science of men.

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What the prophets foretold with flawless accuracy has come to pass in Christ Jesus, the suffering Savior. With all this unfolded through history, “Why do you marvel at this?”

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). †

Jim Poland preaches for the church of Christ at Carthage, Missouri, USA.

The Kingdom of God Is Within You (Luke 17:21)

Ed Benesh

Of all the concepts Jesus Christ ever talked about, this one, perhaps, was more baffling and confusing to not only the religious leaders of the day, but His own followers. “What do you mean the kingdom is within us? We thought you were going to actually build something and actually put us in positions of power!” To men like the Pharisees, who failed to understand this notion, it was a threat of being removed from their positions. “What! A new kingdom—without us?” For such, they sought to kill him, loving the chief seats among the people.

Yet, if He said it once, He said it a thousand times, His kingdom is not a physical thing, but spiritual, that will not “come with observation”. Think about it in some more mundane terms. Each of us has or at least has ridden in a car. As you are riding along, you do not see the vital fluids of that vehicle coursing through the metallic, venous system to lubricate and cool the engine, do you? Of course not! To disturb it would be to interrupt the functioning of the vehicle. Yet, it is essential. No oil, no go! You can put it on the outside of the engine all you want, where it can be observed, but it will only smoke smell and—well, your engine will burn up anyway. It is that simple.

The same is true with the kingdom of God. It is within us. It renews us, refreshes us, invigorates and makes us spiritually alive. Later in Scripture, we are told always to be *“ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within us.”* Make no mistake, the kingdom will be readily seen in us. Are we friendly to others, across the board, regardless of who they are? Can we, from the tower of that kingdom within us, see clearly enough to empathize and sympathize with others in their plights? Will people see something more in you than simply another smiling face? Or, perhaps they will see an anxious, worried I-do-not-really-rely-on-God face that is quicker to tear apart others than to help them? Who we are will readily be seen, though the “why” must be explained and defended. It must be taught. Even then, not all will understand, being deceived by the notion that “I have to see to believe.”

Christianity is not centered on a building, preacher, pulpit, or budget. These are simply the tangible necessities that stem from the kingdom within us. You can have none of the former and still be a Christian with the kingdom in your heart. People might see your building, pulpit, or preacher, but if they never see Christ in your life, then they will never see the kingdom.

In this day, be sure that kingdom is within you first. Read our Lord’s Word, submit to His will and let your heart (mind) be transformed and renewed. Then let that light shine with a heart bursting with care, love and joy of the kingdom. †

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REVELATION IS MISUNDERSTOOD BY MANY

Roger Mills

God's last revelation to us is called Revelation. This last book of the Bible is unknown to many and misunderstood by many more. It is a shame it has become a paradise for fanatics, a playground for eccentrics, and charlatans calculate far-fetched fantasies from its figurative language. Others tend to ignore it.



Notice what Christ says: *“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written in it”* (Revelation 1:3). Have you been blessed by reading it?

It is a book that tells of great rewards for the righteous. It gives the faithful Christian optimism. It also tells us that Christ knows of all our trials and works. Read chapters 1-3. It may be dark now and a lot darker later, but you can know the final victory is already won in heaven, and you must simply choose whose side you are on and live accordingly.

Much can be learned about heaven and hell, Christ and Satan, good and evil. Christians can find great comfort in knowing that Christ has conquered earth, hell, and the grave, and is exalted on the right hand of God as King of kings and Lord of lords, and

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that when we are “*faithful unto death, we will receive a crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10).

Visualize what John saw. It is a series of moving pictures full of action and constantly changing scenes, each becoming more climactic. This cosmic drama involves the entire universe. The best of Cinerama or any other man-made pageant is cheesy in comparison. At first the plot appears to say that Satan is winning, but the ultimate ending shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the faithful live happily ever after.

Notice the cast of millions. Hear the choral anthems that are even greater than Handel’s Messiah. Christ’s voice like a trumpet (Revelation 1:10) far surpasses anything Pete Fountain ever accomplished. Revelation 19:6 describes multitudes praising God with sounds like many waters and thundering saying, “*Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*” The total sound effects are superior to anything man will ever come up with, and the visuals are dazzling beyond comparison. Talk about a high! Drink deeply from Revelation’s spiritual imagery. It is a masterpiece. When I read it carefully, I can hardly wait to get to my eternal home!

Christians can find great comfort in knowing that Christ has conquered earth, hell, and the grave, and is exalted on the right hand of God as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that when we are “faithful unto death, we will receive a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Do not try to interpret every phrase and symbol. Do not get out on a weak limb of disastrous date-setting and speculative superstition that will put you into a box you cannot get out of without embarrassment. Just get the main theme and thrust of the book. In a movie you do not scrutinize every frame; you look for the overall message of the film.

Know that Christ is pictured as being triumphant over all foes. For yourself, choose to remain true to Him through every difficulty Satan can hurl at you. That had meaning for the Christians in the 1st century, the 11th century, and in the 21st century, and for as long as God chooses to let this world last.

Finally, do not add to or take away from the wonderful eternal words of this book (Revelation 22:18,19). Just try to read Revelation right and regularly. In doing so you will reap a rich reward. †

Editor’s Note: Roger Mills (1929-2012) was a fervent supporter and worker for *The Voice of Truth International*. Though he had significant health problems for many years, he was truly a self-sacrificing servant of the Lord. Roger preached the Gospel for more than 60 years, and was especially effective and successful in his efforts in the northeastern part of the USA.

Characteristics of Boaz

Stan Mitchell

Boaz was a good man! What were his wonderful characteristics? Let us imitate those good qualities in our lives.

1. **HE GREETED OTHERS WITH A BLESSING.** He did this to his workers in Ruth 2:4, *“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, ‘May the Lord be with you.’ And he said to them, ‘May the Lord bless you.’”* This was his greeting to Ruth. *“Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘Listen carefully, my daughter; do not glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids’”* (Ruth 2:8). *“May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge”* (Ruth 2:12).
2. **HE SHOWED KINDNESS AND PROTECTION TO A YOUNG WIDOW.** *“Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw”* (Ruth 2:9). *At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left”* (Ruth 2:14). *“Then Ruth, the Moabitess said, ‘Furthermore, he said to me, ‘you should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest’”* (Ruth 2:21). *“Again he said, ‘Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.’ So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city”* (Ruth 3:15).
3. **HE DID NOT FORGET THE KINDNESS RUTH SHOWED HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.** *“Boaz replied to her, ‘All you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know”* (Ruth 2:11).
4. **HE SHOWED HOSPITALITY.** *“At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and*

BIBLE CHARACTERS

was satisfied and had some left. When she arose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, 'Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles, and do not rebuke her' "(Ruth 2:14-16).

5. HE WAS A HARD WORKING MAN. *"Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight"* (Ruth 3:2). *"When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly and uncovered his feet and lay down"* (Ruth 3:7).
6. HE WAS A PURE MAN. *"It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.' Then he said, 'May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men whether poor or rich' "*(Ruth 3:8-10). There is no hint of sexual misconduct on that night or any other time.
7. HE RECOGNIZED THE EXCELLENCE OF RUTH. *"Now my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask. For all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence"* (Ruth 3:11). He knew Ruth was a woman of noble character (Proverbs 31:10).
8. HE DID NOT PROCRASTINATE. He promised to act the next morning, and that he did without wasting time (Ruth 3:12-4:1:9).
9. HE SHOWED RESPECT AND HONOR TO THE NAME OF ELIMEL-ECH. *"Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birthplace; you are witnesses today' "*(Ruth 4:9,10). Thus the firstborn was considered a son of the lineage of Elimelech. The family lands were purchased by Boaz, who restituted them to the lineage of Elimelech.

As we look at the life and actions of Boaz we should be moved to imitate his great and good life.

Stan Mitchell teaches in the Bible Department at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

A Fiery Departure

Betty Tucker

In 1 Kings, we read of two men of God with very similar names — Elijah and Elisha. It was a time of famine in Israel. There had been no rain for three and a half years. Can you imagine how dry the earth was? All of the grass had died; animals had starved to death. The ground had baked hard so that plowing was not easy.

Change of Occupations

Elisha was a farmer. One day he plowed in the hard, dry field with 12 yoke of oxen. The necessity for having 24 oxen to plow a furrow was two-fold: the oxen were weak from having little food, and the ground was hard and unyielding to the plow.

God had instructed Elijah to select Elisha as his successor. He found Elisha in the field that day plowing with his 24 oxen. Being a man of few words, Elijah simply tossed his cloak over Elisha. Both understood the significance of that simple gesture.

Elisha knew that now he was to be a part of Elijah's work. So, from that day, he walked with the prophet. He became Elijah's servant, for in so doing, he could learn how to do everything that he needed to do in filling his new role.

The Bible tells us that Elisha "*poured water on the hands of Elijah.*" He needed to learn how to do the menial things so he could one day do the great things.

A Simple Ceremony

The two men trained student prophets so they could one day take part in the work of the Lord. Elijah and Elisha worked together for about ten years. On an appointed day, it was time for Elijah to be taken. He was going on to Bethel alone, but Elisha said, "*As the Lord lives...I will not leave you.*" So, he went down to Bethel (2 Kings 2:2). The sons of the prophets (students) watched from afar as the two prophets approached the Jordan River. Elijah took his cloak, folded it, and struck the waters, and they parted, and the two walked across on dry ground (2:8). The young prophets saw this miracle.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Then Elijah asked, *“What shall I do for you before I am taken?”* Elisha did not hesitate. His request came loud and clear, *“Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me”* (2:10). Elijah said, *“You have asked a hard thing. But, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you...”* Elisha could have asked for riches, power, or fame. Rather, his request showed great wisdom.

He had worked side by side with this man of God for ten years. He knew that if he were to be able to carry on in Elijah’s footsteps, he would need more than his own abilities. He would need a double portion of Elijah’s spirit.

As the two walked along together, suddenly a loud noise like a whirlwind was all around them. A chariot of fire and horses of fire separated them, and Elijah went up to heaven in the whirlwind (2:11)!

Elijah’s mantle fell from him as he was taken. Elisha tore his own coat in two pieces. He would not need it now that he had the cloak of Elijah. Elisha knew that God had granted unto him a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, because he had seen that prophet as he departed into heaven.

Elisha folded the mantle and struck the waters of the Jordan, as had Elijah. They parted, and he crossed over on dry land. The young prophets saw this miracle, and they knew that Elisha now had God’s power, evidenced by a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. †

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





Those Whom God Killed

Bonnie Rushmore

Across

2. God killed a great number of Amorites with a _____. Joshua 10:8-14
5. Who was struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:1-10
8. Who was swallowed by the earth? Numbers 16:1-35
11. Who did God kill for touching the Ark of the Covenant? 2 Samuel 6:6,7
12. What city did God destroy with fire and brimstone? Genesis 19:24,24
13. What creature did God use to kill 42 children when they made fun of Elisha's bald head? 2 Kings 2:23,24

Down

1. God killed 102 soldiers with fire from heaven when they came to capture _____. 2 Kings 1:10-12

3. Who did God kill for not producing offspring with his widowed sister-in-law? Genesis 38:9,10

4. Who was killed during the last plague on Egypt? Exodus 12:29

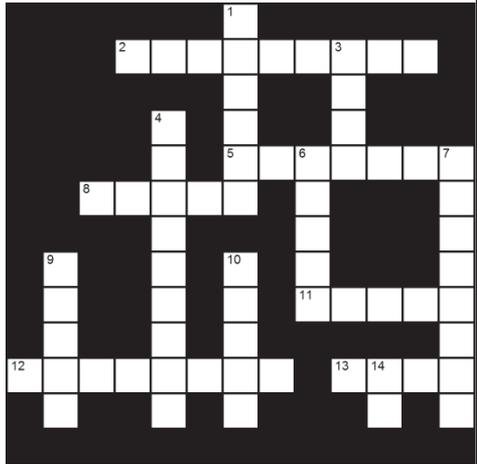
6. Who was burned alive for offering strange fire? Leviticus 10:1,2

7. Who was struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:1-10

9. What city did God destroy with fire and brimstone? Genesis 19:24,24

10. Who was burned alive for offering strange fire? Leviticus 10:1,2

14. Who did God slay for being wicked? Genesis 38:7



What Does It Mean to Be Faithful?

Charles R. Rose

“It is required that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2 KJV). It is not an option. As Christians we have certain responsibilities, both as individuals and as a congregation. Our purpose as a church is evangelism (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark, 16:15,16), followed closely by benevolence (Galatians 6:10). These responsibilities are of individual Christians, but also of congregations where a group of Christians work together. When we speak of faithfulness, we must speak of the individual as a steward of God’s economy (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Some seem to think faithfulness is nothing more than attending services.

Brother Cecil May, Jr. told of a man who had been active in a congregation by leading prayer, serving at the Lord’s Table, etc., until it was discovered he had been involved in several love affairs. The person relating the story to brother May ended by stating, *“and all the while he was a faithful member of the church.”* His thought equated attendance to being faithful.

Others think faithfulness involves attending the assemblies, but also involving one’s self in some of the work of the church. Of course, we are



commanded to *“be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Is it not true, though, that one can do *“many wonderful works”* in Christ’s name and

BIBLE QUESTIONS

still be lost (cf. Matthew 7:21-23)? Just because I preach from the pulpit and teach a Bible class is no guarantee that I am faithful.

It takes a complete life of actions and attitude for one to be faithful. Jesus said our worship must be “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). This involves actions as well as attitude. Someone once gave this illustration: A man attends all the assemblies, attends the Table, leads prayer, but does not teach. He says, “I know I should teach. I have the ability; I just do not do it.” He has the attitude but not the action (cf. James 4:17). A second man attends, and does teach a Bible class, but says, “I do not care if I’m effective or not. I do not care if my students learn or not.” He has the actions without the attitude. Neither is faithful according to Scripture.

Someone says, “Well, God knows I’m not perfect.” We are not speaking of perfection, but faithfulness. Last April my wife and I celebrated our 44th anniversary. In all of those years she has never expected me to be perfect, but there has not been one single day that she did not expect me to be faithful. I know Jesus said, “*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*” (Matthew 5:48). I cannot live perfection as did Christ, but I can be faithful. And being faithful in all we do, we “*walk in the light as He is in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses [continues to cleanse] us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). Thus, forgiven of every sin, one is perfect in God’s sight. Even though we still make mistakes, God counts us as faithful.

Five questions will determine your faithfulness. If you must answer NO to any, you fail the test of faithfulness.

1. Are you living daily for Jesus (see Revelation 2:10)?
2. Do you stand foursquare on the teachings of the Bible (see Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 28:19, 20; 6:24; 1 Peter 1:5-11)?
3. Do you possess the spirit of obedience? Again, we are not speaking of perfection, but faithfulness. One must have the attitude of, “Speak, Lord, and I will obey your command.”
4. Do you love the church for which Jesus died (Acts 20:28)? Test your answer by comparing your actions to Matthew 18:20 and Hebrews 10:25.
5. Are you trying to lead others to Christ? You may not have the ability to personally teach, but you can be instrumental in setting up studies for your preacher or another who is capable. †

Charles R. Rose is the preacher for the Lord’s church in Lincoln, Missouri, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

How May I Know I Am Saved?

Stanley E. Sayers

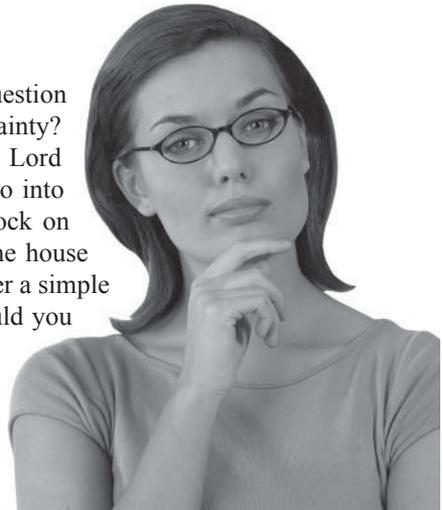
Shall I let the most important question of my entire life be left to dark uncertainty? A beloved brother and friend in the Lord teamed up with a fellow Christian to go into a certain area unknown to them to knock on doors. When the person dwelling in the house came to the door, they would ask him/her a simple question, “If you should die today, would you go to Heaven?”

Somewhat astonishingly, most did not know. This question and their reply became a fruitful field in which to set up a Bible study. As a result, eighteen (18) precious souls were taught and baptized into Christ. Then the fresh new converts were given further instruction on how to live the Christian life, making their salvation sure.

Is it possible for one to know whether or not he is in a saved condition with God? Is it possible for one to know that if he should die today that he would go to Heaven? Let us see what God’s Word, sacred Scripture, says.

God’s Word Is Urgent

When Paul and Silas persuaded the frightened Philippian jailor following the earthquake and the cell doors flying open, that they were all there so that he need not take his life, they urged in answer to his tremulous question, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” – “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*” (Acts 16:30,31). Faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, always comes



BIBLE QUESTIONS

before any additional command, as we see here: “*and he [the jailor] took them the same hour of the night, washed their stripes; and was baptized, he all his, straightway*” (verse 33).

After Saul of Tarsus had seen the glorified Lord, he was given the urgent command, “*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16).

For some reason, nobody ever ate a bite, drank a drop, nor slept a wink once they believed on Jesus, before they hastened to be baptized. It was here their sins would be washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16), they would enter Christ (Galatians 3:27), and the Lord Himself would add them to the church (Acts 2:47), enroll their names in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12), and the Holy Spirit would take lodging in their hearts (Acts 2:38,39; Romans 5:5; Ephesians 1:13; et al).

After faith in Jesus (John 20:30,31), repentance from sins (Acts 3:19; 17:30), open confession of faith in Jesus (Romans 10:9,10), and immersion into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3,4), I am completely forgiven of all past sins (Acts 22:16); I am saved (1 Peter 3:21).

Things That Follow

On Pentecost, after obeying the Gospel (repenting and being baptized), the early church “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). All newly born again Christians (John 3:3-5) are to do the same. They are commanded to assemble every Lord’s Day (Hebrews 10:25), partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7), sing and pray (Colossians 3:16), grow and draw closer to God while feeding on the Spirit-filled Word (John 6:63; et al), and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (James 2:27).

What If I Sin?

Once I become a member of the Lord’s body, His church, Jesus Himself becomes my High Priest and I obtain forgiveness of sins as I repent of them and make confession (Hebrews 4:14; 1 John 1:9; 2:1,2). As a little stream flows beside the highway, the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing me. “*If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). By these, I can know I am saved.

My Lord does not want my salvation to rest in uncertainty, but absolute certainty, and I can only have this certainty by knowing the sacred Scriptures themselves (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Acts 17:11). †

Stanley Sayers is a Christian writer living in Mustang, Oklahoma, USA.

On Wings of an Eagle

Andy Jooste

Introduction: Isaiah 40:27-31

- A. Magnificence of eagles soaring on thermals
- B. Common human experience of fatigue — becoming weary” Galatians 6:9
- C. God does not grow faint or weary: Isaiah 40:28



I. Things That Lead to Spiritual Fatigue

- A. Discouragement: 2 Corinthians 4:8-11
- B. Being unsatisfied: Ecclesiastes 2:17-24 (no job satisfaction)
- C. Loneliness — lack of support: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- D. Weight of sin: Hebrews 12:1-4 compare experience of Christ

II. Antidotes for Spiritual Fatigue

- A. Nourishment through reminders: 2 Peter 1:12-15 like ongoing eating
- B. Meditation — to avoid “fainting in mind” Psalm 119:11
- C. Physical rest for recuperation: Mark 6:31
- D. Godly exercise leading to contentment: 1 Timothy 4:8 NB. active service
- E. Dependence upon God — faith: 1 Timothy 6:6

Conclusion

- A. When physically weary we consult physicians: Luke 5:31
- B. “I’ve Wandered Far Away From God, Lord, I’m Coming Home”
- C. Invitation: Matthew 11:28-30 – Find rest for the soul †

Andy Jooste preaches the Gospel in Mount Vernon, Ohio, USA.

We Must Preach the Gospel

Robert H. Martin

Introduction:

- A. The Lord has commanded that the Gospel be preached to all the world (Matthew 28:19).
- B. This is the world's most urgent need.
- C. In spite of this, millions have never heard the Gospel and many others die every day, lost in sin.
- D. It is our responsibility to preach the Gospel of Christ because of:

I. The Value of the Soul.

- A. Genesis 1:26.
- B. Matthew 10:28.
- C. Matthew 16:26.
- D. 1 Peter 1:18,19.

II. The Power of the Gospel.

- A. Romans 1:16.
- B. 1 Peter 1:23,25.
- C. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
- D. Galatians 1:6-9.

III. The Certainty of the Judgment.

- A. Hebrews 9:27.
- B. Acts 17:30,31.
- C. John 5:28,29.
- D. 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Conclusion:

- A. The Lord is depending on us to get the job done.
- B. Are you doing all you can to teach the Gospel to the lost?



Robert H. Martin is a longtime missionary in the Pacific Islands.

Who Am I in The Life of Christ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word. Give yourself 10 points for each one you identified correctly.

1. I am a relative of Jesus and older by about six months. (Luke 1:36)
2. We are three friends of Jesus who lived in Bethany. (John 11:1-5)
3. God revealed to me that I would not die before I saw the Christ; I held the young Christ when his parents brought him to the temple for the first time. (Luke 2:22-35)
4. I climbed a sycamore tree in Jericho in order to see Jesus as He passed by. (Luke 19:1-6)
5. Jesus cast seven devils out of me. (Luke 8:2)
6. Jesus raised my twelve year old daughter from the dead. (Luke 8:41-56)
7. We appeared with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. (Luke 9:28-36)
8. I am a Samaritan who returned to thank Jesus. (Luke 17:11-19)
9. Jesus healed my ear after Peter cut it off. (Luke 22:50-51; John 18:10)
10. I found no fault with Jesus and wanted to release him. (Luke 23:13-16)



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I in The Life of Christ?

Rebecca Rushmore

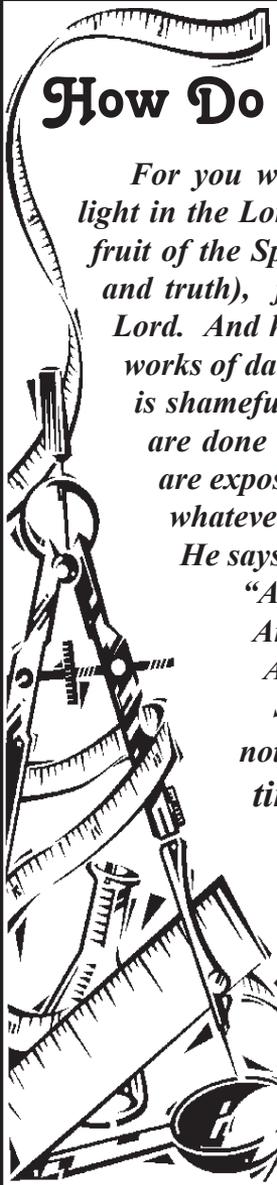
Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word. Give yourself 10 points for each one you identified correctly.

1. Where did the angel appear to Mary? (Luke 1:26,27)
2. Where was Jesus born? (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-6)
3. To what country did Jesus and his family escape to avoid Herod's attempt to kill Jesus? (Matthew 2:13,14)
4. In what city did Jesus grow up? (Matthew 2:23)
5. Where was Jesus baptized? (Matthew 3:13)
6. Where did Jesus live after His temptation in the wilderness? (Matthew 4:12,13)
7. Where did Jesus perform His first miracle? (John 2:1-11)
8. Where did Jesus raise the widow's son from the dead? (Luke 7:11-15)
9. Where was Jesus when He vanished? (Luke 24:13-31)
10. From where did Jesus ascend to heaven? (Acts 1:1-12)



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____



How Do You Measure Up?

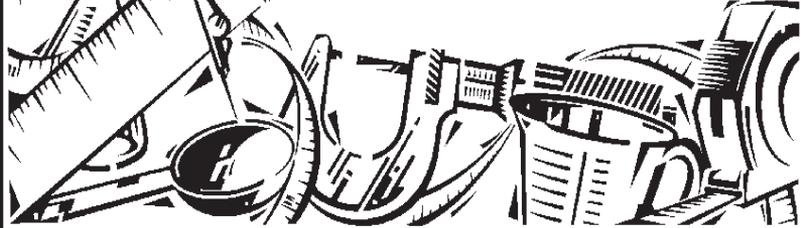
For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says:

*“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”*

*See then that you walk circumspectly,
not as fools but as wise, redeeming the
time, because the days are evil.*

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Ephesians 5:8-16



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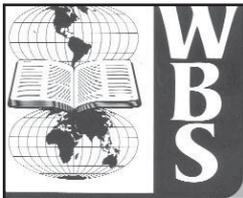
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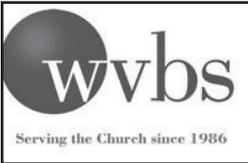


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- * Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- * Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- * If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.

So you are born into an unbelieving home, you live according to the religion of your parents, you grow old, and you die, thrust into eternity to meet the God you never knew. What unspeakable tragedy! The scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God’s Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of The Voice of Truth International is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with \$35 a month, to cover the \$8,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

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

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
call us at 662-283-1192 or send your email to

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Website: WorldEvangelism.org

Dear Brethren:

- ◆ I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, The Voice of Truth International. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 for four issues, or \$20.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. My address is given below.
- ◆ I want to order the complete set of volumes that are still in print (73 issues) for the reduced price of \$2.00 per copy. My address is given below.
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- ◆ I want to send \$25.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed (quarterly). Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way. Or you may send one payment of \$300.00 per year for four issues. This will help us to send more copies to the mission fields.
- ◆ We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.
- ◆ As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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

**Attn: Byron Nichols
THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
Box 11218
Springfield, MO 65808**

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 40)

1. Yes.
2. Nero
3. God
4. God gave it to them. God is in control.
5. No. God is the ultimate authority for everyone, and all will give account to God.
6. God.
7. They bring judgment upon themselves.
8. Good, evil.
9. Do what is good.
10. No.
11. Exercise wrath upon those who do evil.
12. To avoid punishment; for conscience sake.
13. Be pleasing to God.
14. Yes.
15. Taxes, taxes, custom, custom, fear, fear, honor, honor.

Who Am I? (page 106)

Answer: 1. John the Baptist; 2. Mary, Martha, Lazarus; 3. Simeon
4. Zacchaeus; 5. Mary Magdalene;
6. Jairus; 7. Moses and Elijah ;8. 1 of 10 lepers; 9. Malchus; 10. Pilate

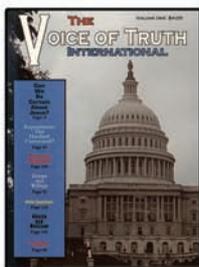
Where Am I? (page 107)

1. Nazareth; 2. Bethlehem; 3. Egypt;
4. Nazareth; 5. Jordan River; 6. Capernaum ;7. Cana; 8. Nain; 9. Emmaus; 10. Mt. of Olives

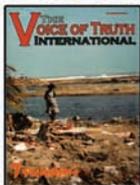
Bible Find (page 99)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



What can Christians do with this magazine???

- * *Use it nightly for family devotionals.*
- * *For midweek church devotionals.*
- * *For bulletin articles.*
- * *Leave copies in waiting rooms.*
- * *Offer a copy to any delivery person.*
- * *Slip your tip inside its pages.*
- * *Provide copies for the church.*
- * *Give to prospects for personal studies.*
- * *Share copies in nursing homes.*
- * *Use them in your prison ministry.*
- * *Take along copies for hospital visits.*
- * *Share with your postman, bank teller, etc.*
- * *Copies are numbered, not dated.*
- * *With the presentation, encourage visiting the church of Christ; suggest a Bible study.*

**DON'T Let them stack up, unused,
to be discarded.**

Wasted tools accomplish NOTHING!!!

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