Volume Eight

The Voice of Truth International

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Scientific Red Faces

As almost everyone knows, the earth is supposed to be almost 5 billion years old, while man has been around only some 3 or 4 million years. These estimates are pure speculation, based upon dating methods that are grounded in evolutionary assumptions. There is NO hard-core test that can determine the age of the earth. Most people believe this simply because they accept what is presented in the media.

Several years ago some scientists discovered human bones buried under thick deposits of mud in California. The bones were submitted to "competent" authorities who declared them to be about 75,000 years old. Unfortunately, however, as they dug deeper, they found an old United States Army button. Now, maybe the United States had an army 75,000 years ago — or just maybe the scientific dating methods are not all that reliable!

Recently an archaeological excavation team, led by professor Mitsuo Kawaga of Beppu University, discovered drawings on the wall of a cave on the Japanese island of Kyushu. The excited scientists announced that the drawings were from 10,000 to 30,000 years old. Alas, a lifelong resident of the area came forward to confess that he had often scribbled on the walls of the cave with charcoal when he was a boy. The "scientists" had only missed it by about 99.99%!

Why is it when "scientists" say that something is billions of years old, the average person believes it as if the object had a date carved upon it?

When Christians accept the dates which are a part of the evolutionary system, they are playing right into the hands of infidelity.

Wayne Jackson

The Voice of Truth International

A Word . . .

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 lists special gifts of the Holy Spirit given by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Verse 11 says these gifts were distributed by the Spirit, ". . .as He wills."

To whom would the Spirit have chosen to give the miraculous gift of **faith**? *Surely, to those who by their own commitment and dedication would have naturally grown as leaders in faith.*

To whom would the Spirit have chosen to give the miraculous gift of **knowledge**? *Surely, to those who by their own commitment and dedication would have naturally grown as leaders in knowledge.* How do we grow in knowledge? By a sincere, diligent, and continual searching of God's word. The purpose of this magazine is to encourage that type of study and knowledge.

The churches of Christ salute you. (Romans 16:16)

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Readers' requests for articles on particular subjects will be considered. Comments and suggestions regarding the content and appearance of the magazine will be appreciated. Our goal is to strive for excellence.

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Layout Editors: Betty Burton Choate
Barbara A. Oliver
Art Consultant: Steven B. Choate
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate
Promotion: Colin McKee, Bobby Tillman, Sudhir Mendiratta, Dale Grissom, Don Hinds, Oran Rhodes, Mark Posey Buck Davenport, James Warren

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WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

J. C. CHOATE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Regardless of what one may do in life or how good his morals may be, there is no substitute for facing the question, "**What Must I Do To Be Saved?**" and then responding to it. Paul says that one is a sinner (Romans 3:23; 5:8), and will remain accountable until he is saved from his past sins. Since he cannot save himself he must comply with the Lord's terms of pardon. God sent his Son to die to make salvation possible (John 3:16,17). Christ shed his blood that one might have forgiveness of his sins (Ephesians 1:7). It is that simple.

But again, **What Must I Do To Be Saved?** *Is there something to do?* If so, what? One way to answer this question is to go to the words of the Lord. Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). Again, he said, *"...Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"* (Luke 24:46). Jesus further stated we must confess Him before men if we are to be confessed by Him to the Father (Matthew 10:32).

Another way to answer that question is to go to the inspired writers. Paul said, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). The Hebrew writer declared that *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6). Then Peter declared, *"...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:3). When Saul asked what he should do (having become a believer, confessing the Lord, and showing his penitence), he was told, *"And now why tarriest*

thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Then take a look at the 11 cases of conversion found in the book of Acts as recorded in Acts 2,3,8,9,16, and other chapters. You will see in each case that the gospel was preached, and the hearers believed, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in the Lord, and were baptized for the remission of sins.

To simplify the conditions of salvation, and to help us understand them in a logical way, the commands have been called steps. **Step 1:** hear the gospel; **step 2:** believe it; **step 3:** repent of one's sins; **step 4:** confess Christ as being the Son of God; **step 5:** be baptized for the remission of sins.

It is further explained that these steps put one into Christ and his church where he is saved from his past sins and is now a child of God (1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:26,27).

Another way of explaining salvation is by showing the new birth, or spiritual birth, which takes place when one obeys the Lord (John 3:3-5). When the truth — God's seed — is planted in one's heart, it conceives, and leads that person to be immersed in water — baptized — *born of water and the Spirit* (John 3:5; Romans 6:3,4; 2 Corinthians 5:17), to come forth as a new creature in Christ.

The Bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and was resurrected on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Paul says in Romans 6:17,18 that we *obey a form of that doctrine* when we die to our sins, are buried with the Lord in the waters of baptism, and are raised from that watery grave to walk in newness of life. Thus, when one obeys the Lord, in his very acts of obedience he is saying that he believes in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and he is figuratively re-enacting that death, burial, and resurrection. Again, read Romans 6 closely.

So then who can be saved? *Any one who is old enough to hear and understand the truth, who believes it with all of his heart, turns away from his sins, confesses Christ before men as being the Son of God, and is baptized for the remission of his sins.*

But what about the grace of God? Paul says we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 28:9). This means the Lord has provided salvation, and through our faith we are to obey Him so that we may be saved. In the end it will be by the grace of God that we are saved — if we are saved — since we can never obey enough commands or earn enough merit by our good works to be saved. At the same time we must remember that *even God's grace cannot save us if we refuse or fail to obey His commands.* ✝

WE NEED YOUR HELP

BYRON NICHOLS
MANAGING EDITOR

We possibly need to make it more clearly understood that **The Voice of Truth International** is not a business venture or enterprise — IT IS A WORK OF THE CHURCH. And like most any other work of the church, this particular work needs the help and cooperation of many.

Let me share with you some ways that you can assist in the progress of this work.

1. Write and let me know of how the magazine has helped you or others. Do this regardless of whether you live in the United States or in some other country. It is important for us to know in what way(s) the magazine is important to you. This helps us to know what we are doing that is helpful and needed. So, I would welcome your letters or calls. Send mail to 2148 N. National, Springfield, MO 65803, or call at (417) 862-7772.

2. Offer your suggestions for ways that we can improve the magazine. Obviously we cannot please everyone totally, but we want to provide the kind of publication that you desire and that will further the cause of Christ. If there are changes that could be made which would bring about improvement, we would like to know of them. Please bear in mind that cost is always a factor in our decisions. We cannot afford to increase our expenses, and we would love to be able to reduce them.

3. Be a subscriber. Many of you reading this are already subscribing

to the magazine, but others are not. For only $12.00 you can receive four quarterly issues. You can keep your copies of each issue for future study or reference, or you can pass them along to others who are not yet receiving the magazine. By being a subscriber you not only help yourself by receiving **TVOTI** for yourself, but part of your subscription price helps us to send thousands of free copies — little "printed missionaries" — to mission points all over the world, to people with souls just as precious to God as yours.

4. Give gift subscriptions. It would be interesting to calculate how many people are now receiving **TVOTI** because someone else has chosen to send it to them as a gift. The number is significant. Could you provide maybe one or more gift subscriptions for others who need this magazine? This is a very inexpensive way that you can give spiritual food so that someone who is especially important to you can grow thereby. It might make an eternal difference. Just recently a member of the church in one state provided a gift subscription for a Christian in another state. The recipient was so pleased with his gift that he sent money the very next month for eight gift subscriptions for some of his friends!

5. Support this work financially. There is a great need for more individual Christians to financially support this teaching effort. No amount given is insignificant. Every single dollar is important. We most certainly do not encourage anyone to deduct from their giving to their home congregation in order to help with this work. However, many could give at least a small amount on a monthly basis, or on a one-time basis, or occasionally. This special teaching endeavor is indeed worthy of your support.

6. Encourage your congregation to support this work. A growing number of congregations are seeing the need to help in this special effort to proclaim the Word of God around the world, but the assistance of many more is needed. Just $25.00 per month is a great help and encouragement. We can even make copies of each issue available to congregations for their own use when they become regular monthly supporters. Write or call about this.

7. Show the magazine to committees on missions, outreach, and visitation. Encourage those involved to ask that the congregation get a supply of each issue for use in those areas of work. This magazine is of such a nature that it can be and is being used quite effectively in a number of different ways.

8. Provide free airline tickets. Perhaps your work requires so much air travel that you could help us by providing an occasional free airline ticket from your accumulated free miles. Our work would be greatly enhanced

by our availability to travel to more distant parts of the country in behalf of the promotion, but the cost is prohibitive on our limited funds. You could provide a wonderful service if you are in a position to contribute to this effort for the Lord in this unique way.

9. Help us to get speaking appointments. J. C. Choate and I, as well as a few others, are always eager to inform congregations about this work. You could render a real service by helping us have more such opportunities. It is important for the church to become aware of this extraordinary teaching tool that is having such a positive impact on people's lives all over the world.

10. Be a volunteer representative in your area. We need brethren who can and will donate a little bit of their time in securing and filling speaking appointments in their areas. Ladies could speak to ladies' classes or groups about the work. We will be glad to assist you with needed information, etc. Please seriously consider this avenue of service.

11. Buy copies to put in public waiting areas, etc. You can help in this effort by putting copies of the magazine (with permission, of course) in such places as barber and beauty shops, dental and medical waiting areas, libraries, and on and on. We just never know what good will develop.

12. Pray for this work. Please pray fervently for those of us who are directly involved with, and responsible for, this very special teaching endeavor. Pray for our writers; they are so very important. Pray for all who have access to the magazine, that they will be receptive to God's Word. Pray that many, many more will also be able to receive **TVOTI** soon, so that they too may have the opportunity to benefit eternally from this work. Pray that many more congregations and individual Christians will become active participants in this venture. Pray both privately and publicly for this work. Public prayers have the benefit of not only asking God's blessing, but also of bringing the matter to the attention of all those who hear the prayers.

13. Tell others about TVOTI. Take advantage of any opportunity to inform others, Christians or non-Christians, about the magazine. This is certainly not the *only* good work being done by the church today, but I honestly believe that it is indeed *a good work,* one that is providing quality teaching material which is helping a great many people, and one that is deserving of being publicized so that more and more folks are made familiar with it.

Please prayerfully select one or more means of using your Christian influence in behalf of this worthy effort to proclaim Christ to the multitudes. ✝

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Our Goal

Realizing that the responsibility given to the church by our Lord was the evangelization of the world, it seemed imperative to us that there be a publication for the church on a world-wide scale. **The Voice of Truth International** is our answer to that need.

American congregations are urged to add the support of this magazine to their budget. In return for contributions of $25.00 per month, 35 copies of each issue will be sent for congregational use among contacts, new converts, in jail ministries, in WBS work, and for distribution in offices and waiting rooms. Used as an evangelistic tool, we believe the magazine can be a tremendous power for good.

We urge mission-minded churches to help us in our stand for the truth by supporting this work. Please call 601-283-1192.

JCC

I Sanctify Myself For You . . .

. . .if, my friend, between your
God and you
Stands me and my frail
grasping of the truth
How sternly I must watch,
And guard my soul from sin,
Be pure from deep within,
Must learn His will,
And do His will,
And walk each step with Him
So He will hear *my* prayers for *you*
And help me share His truth.

If, between His love and you,
I stand,
How careful I must be
To cling to both your hands
And help you see
Your God through me.
I would not — oh, I *cannot* —
Divide you as a wall
And blind your eyes
And keep your heart too far away
To hear His call.
For your dear sake
I sanctify myself,
Sure that each step I take
Draws you nearer to Himself.

Oh, Friend, I'm longing for that day
— That happy day —
When you will be His son
And we can bow as one
Before our God.

— Betty Burton Choate
(John 17:19)

God exists, or God does not exist!

Agnostics say they just do not know whether God exists or not. But, the position of agnostics is only a denial that man can decide between believing God exists and believing God does not exist. It is my belief that agnosticism and atheism are both unreasonable.

One who does not believe God exists is called an atheist. But, an atheist *does believe* some things; he has a kind of faith.

1. An atheist *believes* there is no God. If he should say he knows there is no God, he puts himself in an extremely awkward position. To know there is no God, one would have to know everything, because if there were just one thing he did not know, that one thing might be that God exists! So, at best, an atheist can merely *believe* there is no God. He cannot *know* there is no God without knowing everything!

2. An atheist *believes* that matter has always been here, or that it came into being without any intelligence being involved. Regardless of which of these an atheist believes, his belief forces him to also believe that matter brought into being the present order of things, including all living things.

3. The atheist *must believe* that lifeless matter not only became alive without any intelligence to direct it, but he must also believe some of that matter not only became

Beliefs of Atheists

Basil Overton

alive, but it also became *conscious* of itself, including man with his brains and his beliefs. These beliefs of men include both the theistic concept (believing in God) and the atheistic concept (not believing in God).

According to atheism, matter brought into being the concept that there is a God! An atheist has to believe that mindless matter, after it got here somehow, then somehow developed into living forms, and that matter developed brains in some of these living beings including human beings, and then worked out atheism in the brains of atheists, and theism in the brains of those who believe in God.

4. If an atheist *believes* there ever was a time when nothing existed, he must also *believe* that something came out of nothing! It seems that even an atheist would find that hard to believe!

5. To *believe* his position an atheist also believes in spontaneous generation of life from non-life. Scientists say life could not have always existed on the earth. So, according to scientists life had a beginning. Life coming into being from non-intelligent, non-living matter by spontaneous processes would be a greater miracle, and harder to *believe* than to *believe* that God exists and that He created matter and life!

6. An atheist has to *believe* that the order, symmetry and balance of nature came from mindless matter.

7. To be an atheist one has to *believe* that consciousness arose from a chance-produced combination of non-conscious matter. He has to *believe* that the "creator" of consciousness was not merely unconscious, but non-conscious, matter!

8. An atheist has to *believe* that human minds like his own, with which he does his believing, came from what was mindless and therefore thoughtless! Atheists have to *believe* that all their thoughts come from what was without thought!

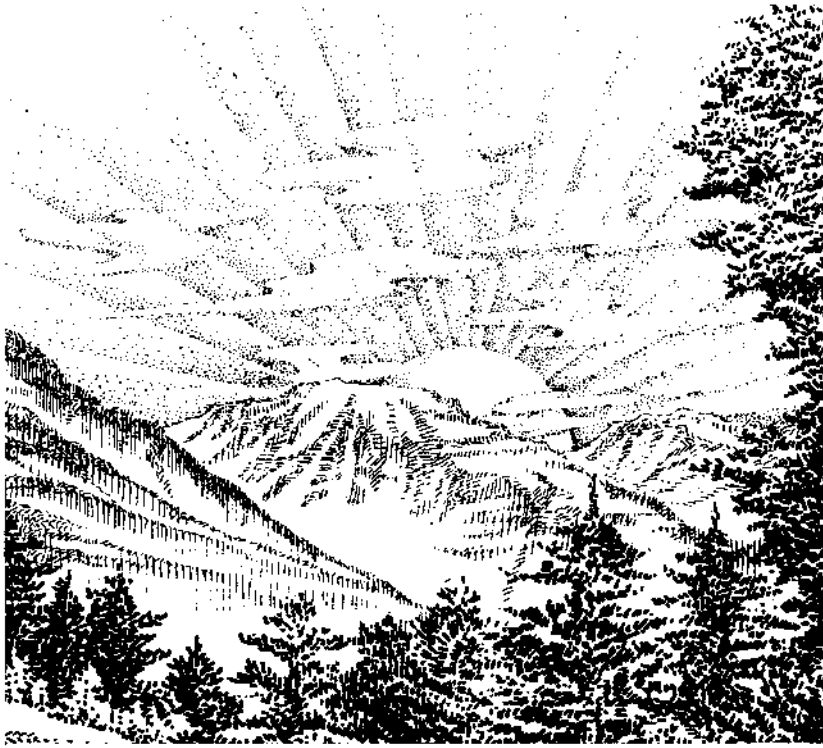
9. An atheist has to believe that mindless matter became intelligent enough to deny that intelligence had anything to do with its existence and its becoming intelligent. He also has to believe that without any intelligence being involved, non-intelligent matter became intelligent enough to say that this whole colossal universe was brought into being without intelligence and that it is not governed by intelligence!

It is not surprising that David wrote: *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"* (Psalm 14:1). ✝

Basil Overton, a preacher of the Gospel and editor of *The World Evangelist*, lives in Florence, Alabama.

There Is But One True God

Maxie B. Boren



From the very opening verse in the Old Testament, the Bible attributes the existence of all things to the creative genius and power of Almighty God. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). Notice further what the Sacred Record declares: *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth . . . Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:6,8). *"In six days the Lord made heaven and earth,*

the sea, and all that is in them" (Exodus 20:11). *"The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens"* (Proverbs 3:19). Think of a being so great! Such knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and power that was necessarily involved in the creation of all things is awesome! It is nothing less than overwhelming to ponder! The finite minds of mere men just cannot fully comprehend the infinite wisdom and power of God. But one thing is for sure . . . the true and living God should be truly exalted in the hearts of all humanity! People of every nation should stand in absolute amazement of the One who has always been, and is now, and will always be the Supreme Sovereign of the whole universe!

The Psalmist of old wrote, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard"* (Psalm 19:1-3). Yes, by observing the design and beauty of all that surrounds people the world over, there can be no doubt that there was indeed a Master Designer and Creator. Every day and every night the evidence of this truth can be seen in the natural world in which we live. There is no way it could have just happened by blind chance! The prophet Jeremiah penned these words, *"Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You"* (Jeremiah 32:17). *"Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created . . . Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heaven"* (Psalm 148:5,13).

No wonder then, that one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, named Paul, indicted the ancient Gentile nations for their calloused hearts. He wrote, *"For 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, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but . . . professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever"* (Romans 1:20-24).

Sadly, those words written by inspiration so long ago are applicable to what is going on in many parts of the world in the 1990's! Because **many**

people have chosen not to believe in the one true and living God, but in gods made with hands (idols), or in creatures such as cows and even snakes! Please note that wherever Paul went during his first century lifetime, he rebuked idolatry of all kinds: To the people of Athens, he said,

> *Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'for we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:22-29).*

And again at Ephesus, and throughout the western part of Turkey, this same apostle declared, *"they are not gods which are made with hands"* (Acts 19:26).

In view of all the above, I would today implore people everywhere to turn away from any form of idolatry, to the true and living God who created all things. Read and study the Bible, which is His revealed will to all humanity the world over for all time. Let it be **your** source of spiritual information; let it be your guide and counsel in life. It is God's Word! It not only tells you of God's creative power, but it tells you of His power to save your soul from sin, which is the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ! The same apostle who was quoted earlier in this article wrote *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe"* (Romans 1:16). *"Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9). ✞

Maxie B. Boren preaches for the Brown Trail church in Bedford, Texas, U. S. A.

THE POWER OF GOD

Frances Parr

What is the most powerful thing God has created? One might say the universe, while others would name a waterfall, the sun or moon, the blue whale. Consider also the workings of the human body, and love one for another. The list is endless.

Mortals cannot imagine the vastness of God's power. For thousands of years brilliant scientists have studied our universe, the earth, animal life, and the human body. Their discoveries fill volumes; however, what they have learned shows how much more is still shrouded in mystery.

Many things we know about and live with are quite beyond our mastery. The mighty ocean waves can smash our strongest constructions; illnesses strike down the most stalwart; tornadoes rip through any obstacle. But our God is able to control them all.

Man is a mere speck or a vapor which lives today and is gone tomorrow. David, in Psalm 8:4, said, *"What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?"*

Why indeed would God create the universe, make the earth a special place for man to live in, and give it to him to care for? Love. So much love that He sent His Son to die in our place when we had committed sin against Him.

While Jesus lived on earth He did many miracles to show that He was God's Son. Even so, the majority did not believe. After seeing Him feed 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few fish, the Pharisees asked for a sign from heaven. Mark 8:12 says that Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, *"Why does this generation seek a sign? . . . no sign will be given to this generation."*

They had already had many signs if they would but acknowledge them. David wrote in Psalm 19:1, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."* Anyone desiring proof of God's power needs only to observe His creation.

God's power is evident in great and mighty things. Consider also the small things. Jesus used the tiny mustard seed as the object of two parables. He said, *". . . when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its*

branches" (Matthew 13:32). Observe God's power in a seed which looks dry and dead, yet when given water and nutrients from the soil, it becomes a living plant. At the moment of creation God put within each plant and animal its own seed. *"Be fruitful and multiply,"* He told them (Genesis 1). Only God could devise such an ingenious plan.

God composed the human body with billions of microscopic cells. Different combinations of these cells control breathing, heartbeats, and digestion without our giving it a thought. God's power in minute things can easily be seen in the body.

God, in His omnipotence, desires but one thing from man — his love in return. Throughout the Old Testament, many times God said, *"I will be your God and you will be my people."* Consider that God made the entire creation to that end. The church is the answer to God's desire for someone to love Him.

Possibly the thing which requires God's greatest outpouring of power is the forgiveness of our sins. While God cannot even look at sin, He loved us enough to send His Son to bear the burden of all our transgressions. Paul said in Romans 1:16, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes . . . ."*

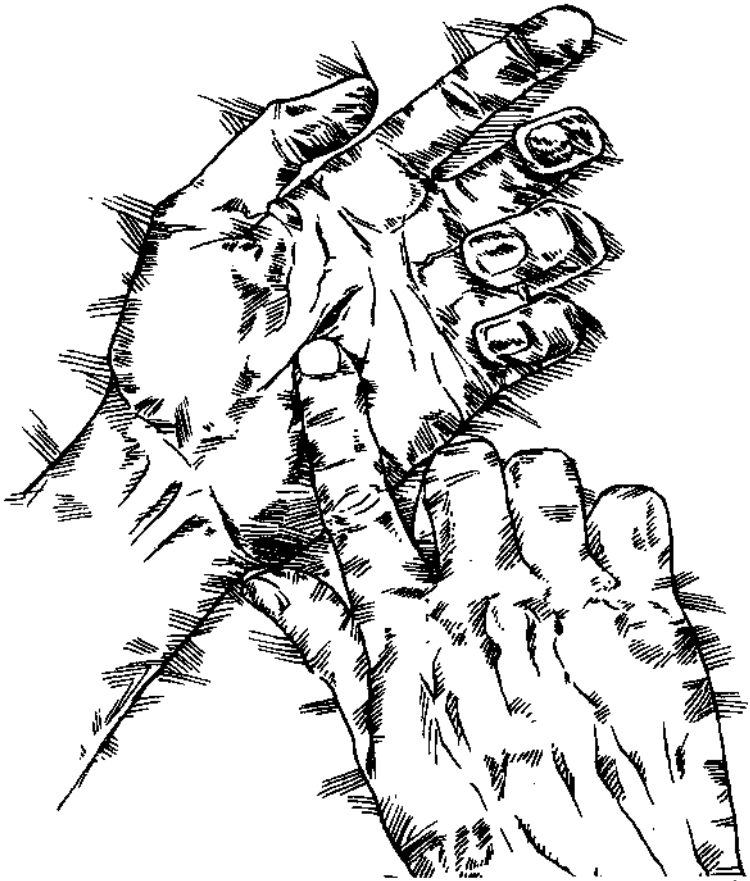
Quoting Paul again in Ephesians 3:20 and 21, *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."*

You and I can have God's power to work within ourselves. Accepting Jesus as His Son and putting our egotistical self aside, we open the way for that power to enter in. We will gain rewards far beyond our expectations. In Luke 6:38 we are promised that our giving will be returned *"good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over . . . ."*

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). God caused John to write a personal note to each of us. He said, *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son"* (Revelation 21:7).

The same powerful God who created the heavens and the earth wants me for His child, if I will only allow Him to be my God. ✝

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, U. S. A.



Jesus Christ Is Deity

E. Claude Gardner

Who is Jesus of Nazareth? During His earthly ministry the evaluations of Him reported to Him by His disciples were not uncomplimentary, but they were inaccurate. *"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias: and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets"* (Matthew 16:14). In modern times we hear Him called

an historical myth; a great teacher; a good man; a wonderful ideal; a prophet, but not **the** Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-18); a founder of a prominent religion (Christianity) that is God-approved like many others; and that He was only a human being who had a natural birth rather than a supernatural virgin birth.

The only true and accurate answer was given by the apostle Peter who confessed, *". . . Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). Jesus blessed him for this good confession and said this truth did not come from man as human wisdom, but rather from **"my Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 16:17).

How has God the Father given evidence that Christ, the Son, is divine? Since we believe that God exists and that He has given a divine revelation of His will in the Bible, we then turn to the Scriptures for proof.

The Bible affirmed and Jesus claimed that He was deity. *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). When He was asked by the high priest, *"'art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am'"* (Mark 14:61,62).

Christ established His deity by fulfilling **all** of the numerous Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah. After His resurrection Luke records, *"And He said unto them, 'These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me'"* (Luke 24:44).

Christ brought a way of life that is unmatched in the annals of history. The context, as well as His manner of teaching, transcend what a mere human can convey. The explanation — *"never man spake like this man"* (John 7:46). The powerful Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is still a challenge today. Men have not improved on its lofty principles. After He finished, Matthew records the reaction of the hearers, *"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"* (Matthew 7:28,29).

Christ demonstrated His being Lord by His perfect life. He never made any mistake in thought, word, or deed. Peter wrote, *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth"* (1 Peter 2:22). His enemies tried to entrap and entangle Him, but always they failed because He was perfect. When Pilate examined Him he stated, *"I find no fault in this man"* (Luke 23:4). We can afford to try to follow in His footsteps to the best of our ability

because He is our perfect example.

Christ performed miracles, demonstrating His power over both the seen and unseen world. He healed the blind and lame, raised the dead, calmed the sea, fed the multitudes, cast out demons, and many other wonders. When He performed such mighty works those present did not and could not deny that a miracle had been done, even though they attributed His power to the devil (Matthew 12:22-27). The enemies of Jesus acknowledged that He worked genuine miracles, but still they rejected Him. *"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, 'What do we? for this man doeth many miracles'"* (John 11:47). The fundamental reason Jesus performed miracles was to prove that He is divine and that He was what He claimed to be — the Son of God. The apostle John made this purpose clear when he wrote, *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"* (John 20:30,31).

Christ died and was raised bodily on the third day after His crucifixion. His tomb was empty as His enemies knew, when Peter fifty days later preached on Pentecost Day in Jerusalem that Jesus had been raised (Acts 2:22-24,31,32), the enemies did not oppose his claim, nor did they produce the body of Jesus. Indeed He had risen and was seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-36). His resurrection is positive proof of His divinity, as the apostle Paul wrote, *"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4).

At the foot of the cross a Roman guard observed the final events and was led to exclaim, *"Truly this was the Son of God"* (Matthew 27:54). The perfect life and teaching, the fulfilled prophecies, the miracles, climaxed by the resurrection convince us to confess and claim Jesus as Christ and Lord. Upon this expression of great faith in Him we are buried with Him in baptism for the remission of our sins. *"Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'" (Acts 2:38).* Thereafter we must strive daily *"to be conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8:29). ✝

E. Claude Gardner is President-Emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Fearfully And Wonderfully Made

Gene Carrell

We visited in a home where a sweet new baby had come to live. This little bundle of potential just slept right through our visit, but had he been awake, he likely would not have greeted us with anything more than a burp. With Christian parents, he will grow into an understanding of God's will for his life, and after boyhood, when he comes into manhood, he perhaps will himself become the father of yet another generation.

I couldn't help but think that if all the billions of sperm cells and egg cells from which the world's population originally grew were gathered in one place, they would occupy a space equivalent to no more than that of a single thimble. From that single thimble-full, a world has been populated, and each individual in that populated world is a delicate piece of machinery which has no equal in the universe. Each one comes equipped with a marvelous brain which can direct all its activities, hands, feet, eyes, the ability to heal itself when it gets scratched up, and the potential for creating other human beings like unto itself. It is little wonder that the Psalmist said, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14).

Nothing gives greater evidence of the skill of a workman than the observation of his handiwork. I find it inconceivable that men could observe the creation and declare that there is no Creator. Beyond that, if a lumber yard of raw materials could supply the essentials for but a few houses, how could a thimble-full of raw materials supply the essentials for the populating of a world? Call me naive, but my integrity will support no other conclusion than that which says that an omnipotent God caused this world to come into existence.

Albert Einstein once said: "The most beautiful thing we can witness is the mysterious. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed." He further said, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind." What he was telling us was that we dare not blind our eyes to the things that are there. We have to face reality, and if the greatest of human minds cannot make a city from one lumber yard (not enough materials), then how could a world of people spring from a thimble-full of materials?

Dr. O. A. Battista, a man of science, put it well when he said: "The more I examine God's magnificent handiwork, the more facts I unearth about the elusive wonders of His universe, the more I realize that He is present and working in it all. With all my heart, I am proud to proclaim 'I believe in God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of all knowledge.'"

Gene Carrell has been preaching the Gospel for many years in Columbus, Ohio, U. S. A.

"For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb . . . My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.

How precious also are Thy thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand" (Psalm 139: 13-18)

The Air Show

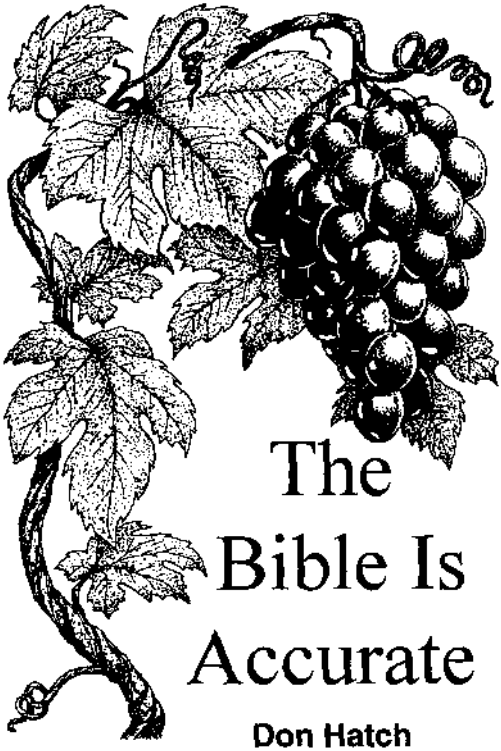
David Deffenbaugh

This past week I witnessed one of the most amazing demonstrations of aeronautical acrobatics anyone has been privileged to see. It was amazing; wingtips only inches apart, precisely orchestrated movements, sharp twists and turns, dives and ascents, and all of this in great groups, not as single units or even pairs.

Someone is already thinking, "Wait a minute, the big annual air show isn't until this coming weekend." You are absolutely right. This had nothing to do with airplanes — I was watching birds. That's right, birds; huge flocks (numbering probably in the thousands) of small black birds. They weren't just passing over either, they were circling around, swooping back and forth, breaking into smaller flocks, regrouping, landing in and taking off from trees. All those birds flying in such close formation, making multiple turns and direction changes, and yet there was not one mishap. Absolutely amazing.

This weekend folks will be astonished at some pretty amazing flying feats at the air show. But I guarantee none will even come close to the precision flying skills of those birds. How can this be explained? If it took millions of years of evolution, as some would say, the birds would have all killed themselves long before ever developing those precise group skills. Rather, it must be the evidence of God seen in the things He has created (Romans 1:20).

David Deffenbaugh is the preacher for the Northside church in Harrison, Arkansas, U.S.A.



The Bible Is Accurate

Don Hatch

An examination of alleged discrepancies in the Bible is important. The vast areas of dates, authorship, arrangement, idioms, names, manuscripts, intellect, nature, moral character, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, duty of man, duty of God, duty of men to fellow men, persons, places, numbers, and time should be considered. Neander stated, "God reveals himself in his word, as he does in his work. In both we see a self-revealing, self-concealing God, who makes himself known only to those who earnestly seek him; in both we find stimulants to faith and occasions for unbelief; in both we find contradictions, whose higher harmony is hidden, except from him who gives up his whole mind in reverence, in both, in a word, it is a law of revelation that the heart of man should be tested in receiving it; and that in the spiritual life, as well as in the bodily, man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow."

The foregoing statement touches on the means to understanding the accuracy of the Bible. The doubter will assume discrepancies, while the believer will look for a means to harmonize the Scriptures with the knowledge of man. If the Scriptures seem different from the knowledge of man, it is the Scriptures that are believed and not man.

For the Bible to be a book divine it must be accurate. Its credibility is established on known events and matters that can be verified beyond a reasonable doubt. Accuracy alone will not prove inspiration. However, it does prove that

the Book is historically accurate in degrees unknown to mankind at any other level. Enemies of the Bible have attacked it upon many grounds. Time after time the Bible has been exonerated by archaeology. If the Bible is proven historically, it stands in all other tested areas. If it fails in this section of truth, it falls in all areas.

The Bible has been absolved of any fault each time it has come under attack. Consider this example: The people called the "Hittites" were long denied by scholars. Some claimed that there were no such people, and they therefore scoffed at the Bible. The Bible mentions this nation 48 times. They were a hindrance as Israel entered the promised land. David married the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Yet written record was silent about a nation called by this name. Skeptics attributed them to the vain imagination and lore of Israel. In about 1876 Dr. George Smith found in Djerabis, Asia Minor, a stone monument that confirmed that there was a city called Carchemish, the capital of the Hittite nation. Dr. A. H. Spence demonstrated later that this nation contended on equal terms with Egypt and Assyria. It was proved that there was a nation of Hittites.

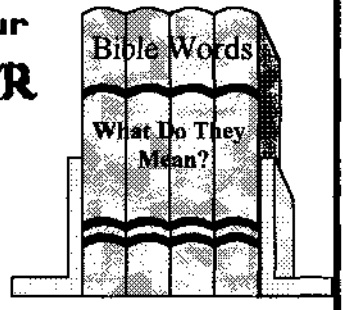
Because of the climate and other factors, the doubter mocked the Bible teaching of there being grapes in Egypt. Joseph interpreted the butler's dream of Pharaoh and grapes. Herodotus, an ancient historian, claimed that Egypt did not have grapes. Thus, the Bible was renounced as a pious fraud. However, among the paintings discovered by archaeologists in Egypt were graphic details of dressing, cultivating, pruning the vines of grapes, and then processing them into wine. The "Father of History," Herodotus, was wrong. The Bible was right.

More could be told of Sargon, who was shown to be real by Dr. P. E. Botta after he dug in Ninevah. The bricks of the Pithom were demonstrated in 1883 by Edouard Naville to have straw in the lower level and none in the upper level, as the Bible stated. The flood was a world-wide epoch which has been proven with accuracy by countless traditions of ancient people and archaeological digs all over the world. Apparent inconsistencies are removed over and over again by authentic research. The doubter has been disproved every time. The Bible is accurate. Read it, trust it, use it, and live by its eternal principles and precepts, while leaning on its promises. ✞

Don Hatch is the preacher for the 5th and Grape Street church in Abilene, Texas, U.S.A.

It Helps to Enrich Your

BIBLE WORD POWER



By Fenter Northern

Are you sure you are understanding the richest meaning of the Bible? Test your comprehension of the following words used in the found in the context of I Peter 1:1-5. After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.

1. **strangers** *adj.*—A: having never met. B: to dwell beside. C. pilgrim. D: alien
2. **scattered** *n.*–A: to be dispersed among the nations. B: throw away. C: topsy-turvy. D: blown away
3. **elect** *adj.*—A: to vote. B: to receive public office. C: to make a choice. D: pick or choose.
4. **according to** prep.—A: under. B: by a plan. C: by a design. D: by instructions.
5. **foreknowledge** *n.*— A: metaphysical. B: superintelligence. C: to have previous information. D: to assign specific individuals to heaven or hell.
6. **through** prep. –A: by the means of. B: sphere within which. C: pierce. D: to enter a door.
7. **sanctification** *n.*—A: to wear white clothes. B: cleansing and separation. C: to be eligible to sing in the choir. D: living above sin.
8. **unto** *prep.*—A: because of. B: having received. C: for. D: in the direction of a goal.
9. **obedience** *n.*— A: to place oneself under their authority of another. B: never ask questions. C: act of learning. D: test of faith.
10. **begotten** *v.*—A: to be alive. B: to be caught. C: to be arrested . D: to reproduce.
11. **lively** *v.*—A: step quickly. B: to be alert. C: active in the spirit. D: hasten or run.
12. **hope** *n.*—A: joyful and confident expectation. B: wish. C: make a bet. D: desire.
13. **inheritance** *n.*—A: lineage or genealogy. B: that stated in a will or testament. C: money in a savings account. D: property to be received.
14. **incorruptible** *adj.*—A. durable. B: never depleting. C: rust proof. D: without tarnish
15. **undefiled** *adj.*—A: having no enemies. B: having washed the hands. C: unsoiled or clean. D: under the files.
16. **reserved** *v.*—A: having under lock and key. B: having your name written. C: watched over for you. D: Laying a claim to.

1. **strangers** (Gk. parepidemos) B:to dwell beside in a foreign country. God's people are pilgrims in the world on their way to their eternal home land. Their citizenship is in heaven.
2. **scattered** (Gk. diaspora) A: to be dispersed among the nations. God's people are believers wherever they live.
3. **elect** (Gk. eklektos) D: picked or choosen (by God) God by his grace chooses faith people to receive his blessings.
4. **according to** (Gk. kata) A: Under; from the higher to the lower. Once they choose to believe, faith people serve under the foreknowledge and will of God.
5. **foreknowledge** (Gk. prognosis) C: to have previous information. God foreknows the destiny of all who choose to believe as well as those who refuse to believe. See Mark 16:15-16.
6. **through** (Gk. en) B: Sphere within which. God has placed salvation and sanctification within the sphere or boundary of obedience to his word.
7. **sanctification** (Gk. hagiasmo) B: clean and separated. Obedient believers are separated when they have their consciences washed clean in Jesus' blood from the defilements of the world.
8. **unto** (Gk. eis) D: unto, in the direction of; goal to obtain. Being washed clean, faith people are ushered forth into the group of those obeying his word.
9. **obedience** (Gk. hupakoe) A: to place oneself under the authority of another; the word was used in a military sense suggesting to be under the command of a higher rank.
10. **begotten** (Gk. anaginnao) D: to reproduce. Having experienced the birth from above by the Spirit of God that renewed their minds in accepting the word of Jesus as their rule of life.
11. **lively** (Gk. zao) C: active in the Spirit; here meaning to begin to act in preparation for the new eternal life
12. **hope** (Gk. elpis) A: joyful and confident expectation of salvation. Just as an expectant family would begin to rejoice at the coming of the new baby by preparing its room and buying its clothes, so a Christian's living hope acts in preparation toward the day of his final salvation.
13. **inheritance** (Gk. kleronomia) D: property to be received; in this context, the consummation of the promised blessing to Adam and Eve and later, the patriarchs. See Genesis 3:15; 12;1ff; Gal. 3:26-29
14. **incorruptible** (Gk. aphthartos) B: never depleting. No believer will be disappointed because their inheritance will not be waiting them.
15. **undefiled** (Gk. amarantos) C: unsoiled; ever clean. Nothing will ever render the inherited abode unclean and thereby prevent their admission to the eternal worship of God.
16. **reserved** (Gk. tereo) C: watched over for the saved to guarantee their inheritance.

Vocabulary Scale

7–10 correct.....good
11–13 correct.....Bible Student
14–15 correct.....Bible Scholar

The Biblical Doctrine of Scripture

Cecil May, Jr.

"Continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

As there is a biblical doctrine of God, of eschatology, of the church, so there is a biblical doctrine of Scripture.

Scripture is understandable.

Taught by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:3), Timothy knew the Scriptures from childhood. He understood them to the extent that they prepared his mind for the Gospel and made him *"wise for salvation."*

To understand the Scripture requires effort. We must want to know God's will (John 7:17). We must search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). We bring biases and preconceptions to the text, and we must diligently try to recognize and compensate for them, but it does not follow that every one is so biased that no one can understand the Bible.

God's plan is a "mystery," hidden, unfathomable. We could not have figured it out for ourselves. But God has revealed the mystery. *"By revelation God made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),*

which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:3-5).

When two people do not understand the Bible alike, at least one of them misunderstands it.

Scripture is powerful.

It was able to make Timothy wise for salvation. It is able to save our souls (James 1:21). It is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32). It is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16).

God spoke His word and there was light (Genesis 1:3). He spoke again and there was life (Genesis 1:11,20,24,26). *"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth"* (Psalm 33:6).

God's Word draws us to God (John 6:44-45), produces faith (Romans 10:17) and convinces and convicts (Titus 1:9). Still today, God's Word gives life to the spiritually dead (John 5:24).

Scripture is profitable.

If a person is ignorant, needing teaching, willfully sinning, needing reproof, going astray, needing correction, or growing and needing further instruction in things that are right, Scripture is profitable for all these, and much more.

We should be open to any good method that will help us teach the Word of God, but we seriously err if we turn to vehicles other than the Word to produce life changes or church growth. Counseling techniques and communication methodology can help us make known the Word of God, but psychology, entertaining programs, and feel-good talks cannot produce salvation or the lifestyle changes God can effect with His Word, if we will faithfully proclaim it to those around us.

Scripture is God-breathed.

That is why it is understandable, powerful, and profitable. ✞

Cecil May, Jr. is president of Magnolia Bible College in Kosciusko, Mississippi, U.S.A.

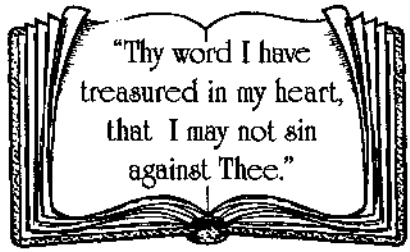
Christian living requires balance. Every negative influence is threatening. Be sure-footed, embrace God's word for balance, keeping your eye on the desired goal.

Bible Study

Tom Kelton

Are you experiencing frustration in your battle with sin? Do your defeats outnumber your victories? Perhaps the problem is that you are fighting the battle with the wrong weapon. We will never be able to defeat sin unless we fight it with the Word of God.

All of the armor Paul lists in Ephesians 6 is designed for defensive, protective use — except for one *offensive* weapon: *"...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (verse 7).



What defeats temptation and sin? Ultimately it is only the Word of God. The Psalmist writes, *"Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11). Knowing the Bible is a wonderful weapon against sin. The more we know the truth, the stronger we are against sin.

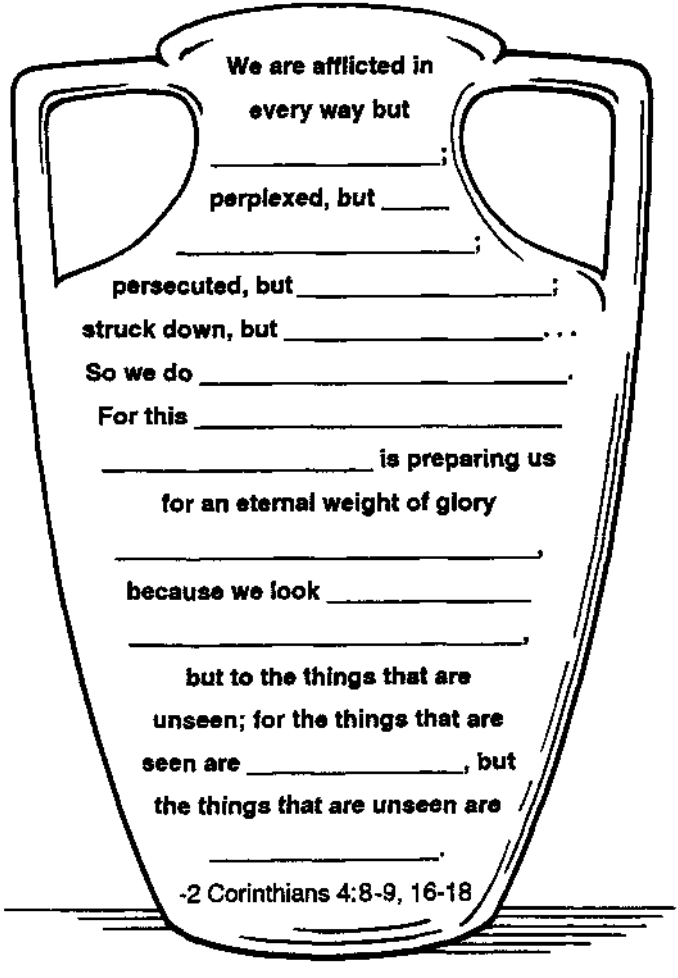
Computer people often refer to the acronym GIGO, "Garbage In, Garbage Out." Computers depend entirely upon what information is fed into them. Nearly all "computer errors" are actually programming errors. If you feed bad information or faulty instructions into a computer, you will get bad results.

The same thing is true in our minds. What you fill your thoughts with will inevitably show up in how you behave. Proverbs 23:7 puts it this way: *"For as (a person) thinks within himself, so he is."* Filling your mind with the truths of God's Word will result in holiness and godly behavior. Filling your mind with other things will bear corresponding fruit. Jesus expressed the results of a mind not filled with God's truth in Mark 7:21-23: *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."* ✝

Tom Kelton is a preacher and writer living in Pharr, Texas, U. S. A.

The Book of 2 Corinthians for adults

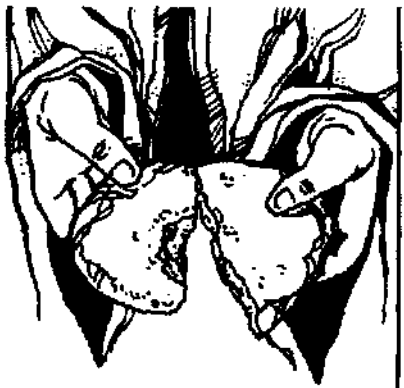
We have a treasure in *earthen vessels*. Using the answers below, fill in the blanks explaining these eternal treasures.



not forsaken
not crushed
not destroyed
not lose heart
not driven to despair

not to the things that are seen
eternal
transient
beyond all comparison
slight momentary affliction

Give Us Truth —



All Of It!

Carroll Sites

" . . . If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).

Alan Redpath observes: "In many places a mutilated gospel is being preached. It majors on free grace but minors on full obedience . . . . Failure to preach the entire message, which includes not only the forgiveness of sins but deliverance from the power of the sin principle, has produced a generation of independent Christians who simply have not progressed with God and who do not grow."

Amen — Amen!! The free gift of God is salvation through Christ Jesus (Romans 6:23). But that does not negate obedience on man's part. Any doctrine that sets forth that man can be saved by God's grace — without obedience — simply cheapens the grace of God. We are saved by grace, through faith (Galatians 2:8). We are also saved by obedience (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:9). Grace does not negate obedience — neither does obedience negate grace. Grace is God's part — obedience is man's part. God *has never said He would give us something for nothing.*

What we need is truth — all the truth — nothing but the truth. We need to be reproved, rebuked, exhorted (2 Timothy 4:2). We need His Word. We need to be saved *by the Word* — to grow *by the Word* — to live *by the Word.* For *by His Word* we shall be judged (John 12:48).

Give us THE TRUTH — THE WHOLE TRUTH — NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH! ✝

Carroll Sites preaches for the Lord's church at Higden, Arkansas, U.S.A.

And They Heard The Voice (Sound) Of The Lord God

Hollis Miller

Following the sin of Adam and Eve, God asked Adam, *"Where are you?"* Contrary to the charge of some critics that God was trying to locate the physical presence of Adam, the intent of the question was to bring the first man's attention to the consequences of the awful thing he had done. It was as if God had said, "Adam, you have turned away from Me, and now you have reaped a harvest you cannot handle; a harvest of sin and death."

The question God asked Adam must be dealt with by every man. Until it is confronted, appropriate steps to bring one's life into harmony with the will of God will not be taken. It is because we have rebelled as did Adam, and brought death to our door, that the grace of God reached out to us with the "hand" of the cross of Jesus Christ. Truly, as the prophet declared, *"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6).

Long ago the Psalmist said, *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts"* (Psalm 95:7ff). So important is the exhortation that the writer of Hebrews repeated it as a warning to a later generation (Hebrews 3:7ff).

Paul declared that all men have sinned, and that none is righteous; no not one (Romans 5:12; 3:10). The apostle's declaration, however, does not mean that every man agrees with him. One who feels no sin, no sense of guilt before God, will not likely seek deliverance. On the day of Pentecost, it was the ones whose hearts had been pricked who cried out, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37).

A heart that is hard and calloused against God's grace manifest in Jesus Christ is in a grave condition indeed. Yet, hearing the voice of God and continually turning one's ear away from it is the very beginning of a hardening heart. May such a thing never happen to any who read these lines. Today, if you hear His voice, turn to Him! ⇧

Hollis Miller is a preacher of the Gospel in Elkton, Kentucky, U.S.A.

Who Commits the Sin?

Don W. Walker

In Exodus 32 we read of the incident of the golden calf. In Moses' absence the people demanded of Aaron to "*make us gods, which shall go on before us*" (Exodus 32:1). Aaron then called for their gold and "fashioned" it with a graving tool, and he made it a golden calf (Exodus 32:4). "*And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it . . . and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play*" (Exodus 32:5,6).

As we close chapter 32 we read in verse 35, "*And the Lord plagued the people, because* ***they made*** *the calf, which* ***Aaron made***." Johnny Ramsey, in Volume One of Practical Bible Studies writes, "When we participate in an act of evil, whether we are the leader in such shameful conduct or not, we become partakers of the ungodly activity" (page 24). Participation in or even aid to and condoning ungodliness provides guilt by association.

This very principle is brought out in both the negative and positive as we look at 2 John and 3 John. Let us notice these two instances and then make some practical application.

In 2 John 9-11 we read:

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Linking ourselves with a doctrine, even if it is by just bidding them that God be with them, associates us with the guilt of that false teaching. On the positive side, we read in 3 John 6-8:

"Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."

The point is that association with God by doing His will naturally associates us with those who are also doing His will, though our services and abilities may differ. It

tells us that though we may not even be doing the teaching, we can become associated with and linked to the teaching of a doctrine, and thus held accountable for what is taught. It is clear that association in any way with ungodliness also makes us partakers of those evil deeds.

Paul would simply state in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Ephesians 5:11).

Our responsibility to false doctrine and ungodliness is two-fold. First, we must not fellowship it; and second, we must reprove it. To compromise by association is to become guilty of the sin, whether we are the leaders or not. With this in mind, let's each study our Bibles much, much more. ✝

Don W. Walker preaches in Stephenville, Texas, U.S.A.

If a care is too small to be made into a prayer, it is too small to be made into a burden.

One minute of keeping your mouth shut is worth an hour of explanation.

Make sure that the thing you are living for is worth dying for.

– Selected

Silent Compromise

It is cowardly not to stand up for your convictions. If you believe a thing is right and true, by all means, say so! The silent majority cannot change things unless they have the courage to stand up and be counted.

John speaks of a group of Jewish leaders who practiced silent compromise:

> *"Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42).*

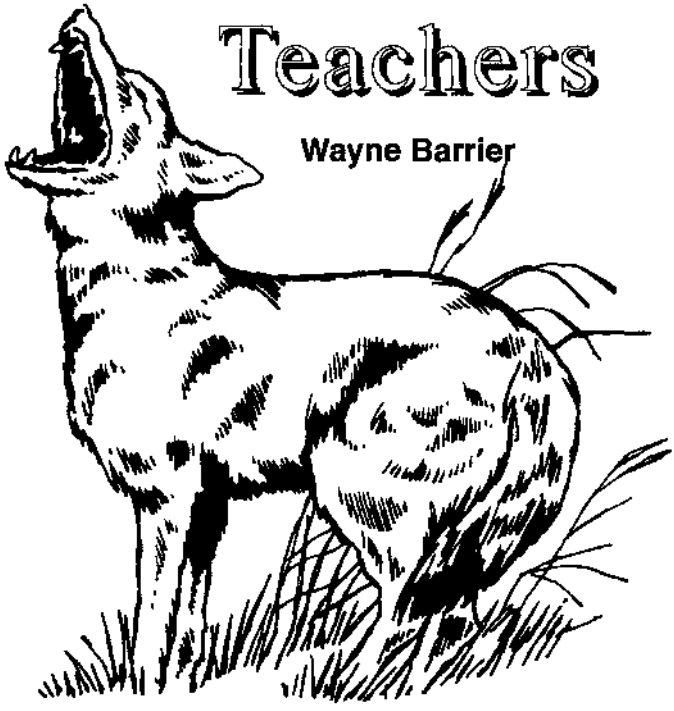
Those Jewish leaders believed in Jesus but they compromised their faith by saying nothing. They did not want the disapproval of the Pharisees or to be cast out of the synagogue, so they kept silent. They were afraid.

All it takes for error to prevail is for those who know the truth to say nothing.

— Jimmy Jividen

False Teachers

Wayne Barrier



The Bible contains many warnings about the dangers of listening to false teachers. As Paul prepared to leave Ephesus he instructed the Ephesian elders concerning false teachers.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30).

False teachers, sometimes from

within the flock, were a first century problem, and are a problem today. They are self-serving, power-seeking, deceitful, and skillful agents of Satan. Today they are the underlying cause of many disruptive, divisive movements in congregations calling for a "new and fresh" look at some of the basic doctrines that are difficult for brethren to follow. They suggest new ways to interpret the scripture, implying that they have superior ability to interpret the Bible for the rest of us.

The apostle Peter also warned first century Christians about false teachers.

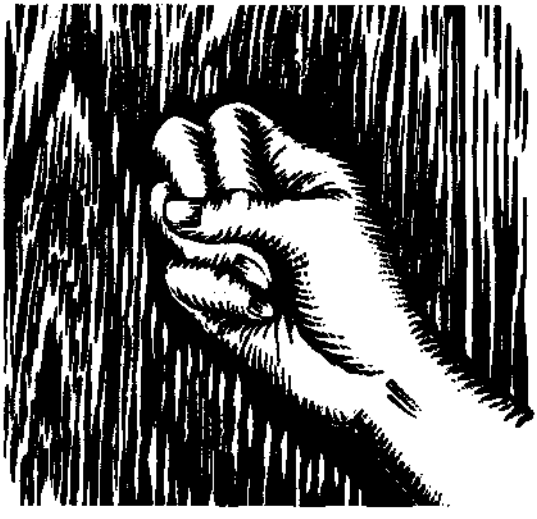
> *"But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false prophets among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*
>
> *And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not"* (2 Peter 2:1-3).
>
> *"These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage"* (2 Peter 2:17-19.

The false teacher can easily find a following among Christians who are not faithful in Bible study and honest self-examination. They sound impressive and seem to have lots of knowledge and special insight.

We must be careful to recognize the false teacher. If we fail, we and many others will be lost. Peter described the situation for the false teacher and those who follow their doctrine:

> *"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:21).* ✝

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



The Door Of Faith

O. P. Baird

The door of a house gives access into the house. Faith is like a door. It gives access into the grace or favor of God. The apostle Paul tells us this in his letter to the Christians at Rome. He wrote, *"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand"* (Romans 5:1,2).

God is perfect in righteousness and cannot look with favor on sin. All sinners who have not been forgiven by God are *outside* of His grace or favor and are lost. Those *in* God's grace have been forgiven of their sins and are saved from sin and its results.

We have all sinned, and those who have not received God's forgiveness need to know how to get into God's grace. They must go through the door which God has opened. That door is faith, because access into God's grace is by faith. The verse which tells us this also tells us it is through Jesus Christ. Therefore the faith that lets us into God's grace is faith in Jesus Christ.

It is very important to know what faith is and how we get into God's grace by faith. Faith is believing, but faith in Christ is more than just believing that He is the Son of God. It is believing so much that we trust Him and love Him and want to do everything that is right and pleasing to Him. It also means that we do not want to do anything that displeases Him.

Many people agree that we are saved from sin by faith, but they think they just naturally know *how* to believe without *learning how* from God's Word. They say, "Just believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and ask Him to save you."

The best way to see how faith gives access into God's favor is to read the accounts in the New Testament of people believing in Christ and receiving forgiveness. The first of these accounts is in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

The people we read about in Acts, chapter two, had rejected Jesus and called for His death. They had cried, *"Crucify Him,"* and they got their demand and saw Him crucified on the cross. But Jesus arose from death, and that proves that He is the Son of God. The apostle Peter spoke to the large crowd of people in Jerusalem and told them what had happened. They were convinced that Jesus arose from death and ascended back to God in heaven. They were grieved in their hearts and cried out asking, *"What shall we do?"*

Many people today would have said, "All you have to do is believe." But Peter did not say that. *"And Peter said unto them, 'Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'... They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls"* (Acts 2:38,41).

They received his word by doing what he told them to do, and when they did that, they received what he promised, the remission or forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They received his word because they had faith in Christ. If they had not had faith, they would not have received his word. They entered into God's grace by the door of faith.

Read all of the second chapter of Acts and the other examples of conversion in the book of Acts (found in chapters 8, 9, 10, 22, and 26) and see how they all came into God's grace through faith. *"For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8).

O. P. Baird is a former missionary to Korea and now lives in Searcy, Arkansas, U.S.A.

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

Only

the obedient will be saved.

Rick Cunningham

"Once saved, always saved," is a common belief today. It is argued that if a person is truly saved, possessing the true Spirit of God, he cannot and will not fall away. If he falls away, he never was saved in the first place.

This "doctrine of perseverance" is simply not true. It is possible, and it is common, for people to be truly saved, lost, restored, and lost again. In fact, even the Holy Spirit warns us not to turn away *after* being saved:

> *"So, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, Their hearts are always going astray, and they do not know my ways. So I declared an oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest.' See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:7-12).

Our words and actions determine our acceptability with God. Jesus said, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching"* (John 14:23). And, *"He who does not love me will not obey my teaching"* (John 14:24). And the Holy Spirit reminded the apostles of this same teaching (John 14:26).

Friend, do not entertain the idea that salvation is certain, regardless of our actions. If we would be saved, we must obey the Lord. Any other doctrine is not the Lord's doctrine. ⇧

Rick Cunningham preaches the Gospel in Clyde, Texas, U.S.A.

The Wrong Orders

G.F. Raines

The terrorized engineers of the two trains that were speeding toward one another on the same track one foggy, fateful night many years ago tried to stop, but it was too late, and the destruction caused by the wreck was unspeakably terrible.

Rescuers found one of the engineers still alive. He was holding a yellow sheet of paper in his hand and saying with mournful repetition, "Someone gave the wrong orders."

Analogously, in the day when *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 5:10), many lost souls will hopelessly cry with infinite anguish, "Someone gave the wrong orders." In that great and final day, *"every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12); and the Lord Jesus Christ has solemnly warned all men that *"if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"* (Matthew 15:14).

The Bible very plainly tells us in the following passages what we must do to be saved, and anyone who says that salvation can be obtained without complying with the conditions expressed therein is simply giving the wrong orders:

Mark 16:16: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

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

Acts 2:38: *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 22:16: *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

Revelation 2:10: *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

Jesus, *"the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Hebrews 5:9), says: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

Let us never forget that *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). ✝

G.F. Raines writes and preaches in Newton, Mississippi, U.S.A.

Quick Commentary On Crucial Verses

Acts 2:38

"Repent, and be baptized every-one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the re-mission of sins, and ye shall re-ceive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Turn From Your Sins

Be Immersed

No Exceptions

By the Authority of the Messiah

Unto

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God Will Dwell in Your Cleansed heart

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The First Century Christians

Kenneth McClain

The first century Christians were members of the Lord's church and met on the first day of the week to worship (Acts 20:7); to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34); to sing hymns of praise (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16,17); to pray together (Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17); to give of their means to support the church, the greatest work in the world (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7); and to receive the greatest message man can receive, God's Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

These Christians worked and worshiped together in local churches, independent of each other; they had no central organization governing them. Each local church was governed by a group of elders (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5). These local churches were linked only by their common ties to Christ, who is the head of the church which He built.

If we are members of the same church as the first century Christians, we must proclaim the same message — the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We will teach that men must believe in Christ and confess that faith. We will teach that men must turn from sin and be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27). We will teach that men must submit to Christ as did the first century Christians, and be added to the Lord's church as were they (Acts 2:47).

If we are true Christians we will seek to restore the New Testament pattern in purpose, doctrine, worship, organization, life, and joy. The purpose of Christ's church then and now is the same — to seek and to save the lost world (Luke 19:10). ✝

Kenneth McClain preaches for the Garfield Heights congregation in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.

Qualified Leadership

Dalton Key

The qualities expected of elders in the church may be found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and in Titus 1:7-10. Much has been said and written over the years concerning the interpretation of these attributes and the stringency with which they should be applied.

Some hold to an ultra-rigid view of elders' qualifications, requiring absolute perfection from prospective bishops on every point. And because no one is without some faults, some weaknesses, they know of no one anywhere qualified to serve.

Others would travel to the opposite extreme, seeing the Bible's requirements as little more than benign suggestions, to be used or modified or discarded as seen fit.

It is true that many of the characteristics are rigid and unbending. Either a candidate is the husband of one wife, or he isn't. He either *"rules well his own house," "having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly,"* or he doesn't. Is he *"not given to wine?"* Is he true to the Scriptures, *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught?"*

Others may be more difficult. A man must be *"not selfwilled, not soon angry,"* and he should be *"sober-minded,"* but to what degree? How hospitable must he be? How vigilant?

In these areas of degrees, surely one's ability to lead and show a worthy example must be considered. Shepherds in the church are to be *"examples to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:3). A man may not be perfect in these areas, but does he serve as a worthy example with respect to them? Is he a man the congregation can easily and comfortably follow? If he can't be looked up to as a fitting example of Christianity, what right has he to lead or oversee the body of Christ?

Some necessary requirements for elders are self-evident. They must be "elders," older men, of sufficient age and maturity to warrant respect. They must be capable of leading. And they must be involved, with a body willing to follow them. Leadership without willing followership becomes nothing more than futile dictatorship. ✝

Dalton Key is the editor of *Old Paths*, and he also preaches for the North Amarillo church in Amarillo, Texas.

The Importance Of The Church

William Woodson

The interest and involvement shown by an individual in a particular activity are usually directly proportional to the sense of importance attached to that activity. The involvement and interest in school work, marriage, even family, will reflect this sense of importance or lack of importance. This is particularly true of the church. No worldly power compels attendance and involvement; there is no financial incentive. Interest and involvement in the church reflect the importance one attaches to it.

How is one to determine the importance of the church to his life and service? Please note the importance the church was/is assigned in Scripture.

1. The church was important to God. He purposed it from all eternity *"according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:11). The purpose was steadily revealed with greater fullness in the prophets and in the ministry of Jesus. The church belongs to God as one who planned and purposed it. Its importance to Him is evident.

2. The church was important to Jesus. He died that the church might come into existence. The church was purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25,26). He serves as head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22). He is the mediator between God and man who makes reconciliation possible (1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:16). He will rule over the church until the end of all things in this world (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The church is of utmost importance to Jesus our Lord.

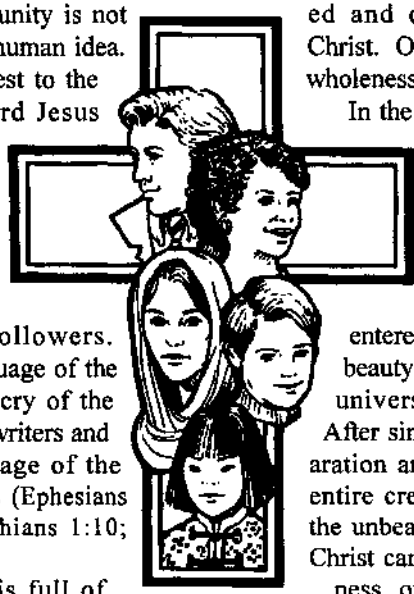
3. The church is important to God's people. They are reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:16). They serve the living and true God and await His Son from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10). In the church the abiding hope in Christ is present (1 Peter 1:3). In the church is found the opportunity and provision for maturing and developing in the image of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). In view of the importance the church holds in the thoughts and actions of God and Christ, and in view of its importance in our own lives, it is worthy of our continuing interest and involvement. ✝

William Woodson teaches Bible at David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

The Power of Christian Unity

John 17:20,21

Reuben Emperado



The idea of unity is not new. It is not a human idea. It is a topic closest to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. If there is one prayer that Jesus prayed with earnestness it is the prayer for the unity of His followers. Unity is the language of the Bible. It is the cry of the New Testament writers and it was the message of the early Christians (Ephesians 1:9,10; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27).

The world is full of tension, war and disunity. There is a constant battle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. There is a disharmony and disunity and separation between God and man. Every man is a walking civil war, there is a constant fight between the flesh and the spirit; man is constantly torn between the desire to do right and the desire to satisfy his sinful urge. The world and humanity are broken, lost, divided and disunited without Christ. Only Christ can bring wholeness to the world again.

In the beginning God created the universe as a cosmos, not a chaos. There were beauty, unity and harmony in it. But when sin entered into the world, the beauty and harmony in the universe were destroyed. After sin follows death, separation and corruption. The entire creation groans under the unbearable burden of sin. Christ came to restore wholeness, order, unity and harmony in the world. It is now the responsibility of His church to proclaim it, demonstrate it, promote it and perpetuate it.

The 17th chapter of John is one of the greatest chapters in the entire New Testament. This chapter contains the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ the night before he faced death on the cross.

In this chapter he prayed for several things: He prayed for **his glorification** (verse 1). He prayed

for **the keeping of his eleven disciples** (verses 11,12). He prayed for the **unity** of the eleven disciples (verse 11). He prayed for the **sanctification** of his disciples (verse 17). He prayed for the **joy** of the disciples (verse 13). Finally, he prayed for **the unity of the future disciples** (verses 20-23).

Our discussion will be focused on the last point, the unity of Christ's **future** disciples (V. 20-26).

In verse 20 Jesus began to pray for both the present and future believers. He said: *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you"* (verses 20,21).

If you are a Christian, a believer in Christ, **your name** is included in John 17. You are included in the words **them** and **those** "who believe through the word of the apostles." Jesus was praying **for us**. He was praying for **our unity.**

Who is the **center** for this unity? Jesus. The Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only means by which true unity can be achieved. Christ not only started it and prayed for it, he is the only means of realizing Christian unity. Any unity achieved without Christ is rebellion to His authority!

Our **faith** in Christ brought us together back to God and Christ. When we were baptized, we were added by Christ into his body the church (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Faith brings the heavenly unity that God desires on earth!

Unity in Christ involves **abiding** in the word of God. *"Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; the one who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"* (2 John 9). The phrase *"teaching of Christ,"* could mean teaching **about** Christ, or teaching **from** Christ. I believe both meanings are implied in that statement. For believing the **person** of Christ demands believing the **words** of Christ (Luke 6:46).

God's word unites but man's teaching divides. When men exalt and follow their own views and dogmas, they make barriers between believers. Only when we unite under the word of God and allow His word to guide us can we find the unity for which Jesus prayed.

There is tremendous power and strength in unity (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). *"Two are better than one, because they have good return for their work; If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one be warm alone? Though*

one may be overpowered two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Please note the benefits Christians can derive when they are united. The wise king told us that two are better than one. Unity gives us better return to our labor.

The 17th chapter of Exodus shows a perfect example of the power of unity and cooperation among God's people. The Amalekites came to attack the Israelites. Moses told Joshua to choose men to fight against the enemies. The next day Moses stood up on top of the hill with the staff of God interceding for Joshua and his men, while Joshua was fighting their enemies. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses the rest of the day, and Joshua won the battle. Each person had different jobs to do, and each one did his part. All of them contributed to the great victory on that day (Exodus 17:8-12).

In Matthew 18:19 Jesus tells us that unity gives strength to our prayers. Our Lord said: *"Again, I say to you, that if two of you* ***agree*** *on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven."*

When God's people are united in heart and mind, God promised to hear them and grant their request. What a wonderful promise! What a tremendous power in unity!

Unity also promotes growth in the body of Christ. A united brotherhood is a fertile ground that will encourage spiritual and numerical progress. This truth is demonstrated in the book of Acts. We are told in the second chapter that the early disciples had a daily fellowship in prayer and in Bible study. They were together and shared in their material things. Because of this they enjoyed favor from both God and men (Acts 2:42-47). And there was a daily addition of the saved to the body of Christ. Unity glorifies God and attracts people to Christ (John 17:21). Unity among us helps to validate the message of the gospel and confirms the claims of Christ. So you see — **unity is evangelism.**

The church is given the task of proclaiming the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). The gospel is God's power to bring every warring individual into unity. It is the only power that can bring a sinner back to God.

Let us make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Reuben Emperado is a preacher of the Gospel in Cebu City, Philippines.

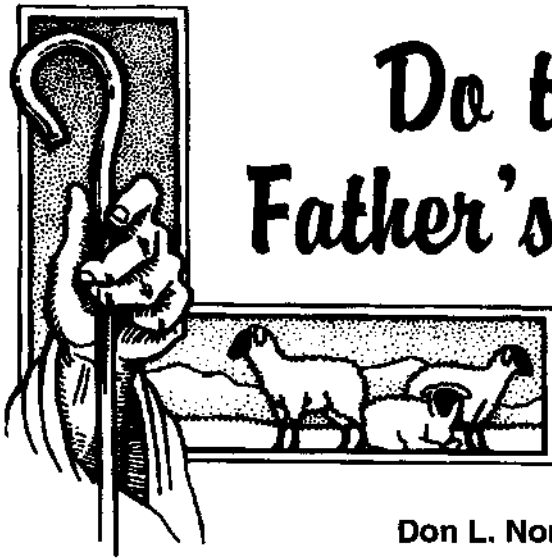
Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word. I am a good example to follow.

1. **100** My grandfather's name was Obed (Ruth 4:17).
2. **90** I had a dangerous responsibility as a young man (1 Samuel 17:34-36).
3. **80** I was a handsome musician (1 Samuel16:12,18).
4. **70** My father-in-law repeatedly tried to kill me, so my wife helped me escape through a window (1 Samuel 19:12).
5. **60** Along with a small army of followers, I lived in hiding in the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1).
6. **50** My friend, with whom my heart was knit together, was killed by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:2).
7. **40** I used stones in an important battle (1Samuel 17:40-52).
8. **30** I repented of the sins of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11,12).
9. **20** I was called "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).
10. **10** God anointed me as the true "first" king over Israel, on whose throne Jesus sits (Luke 1: 31,32).

My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.



Do the Father's Will

Don L. Norwood

(Matthew 7:21; James 2:10-12; James 1:18-21)

Jesus made it very clear in Matthew 7:21-23 that it will do no one any good to call himself a Christian and then fail to learn and actually **do the Father's will**. We must remember that the Father's will is the teaching (all of it) that Christ did Himself and the teaching of the Apostles, who were inspired of the Holy Spirit to reveal and record His will (Hebrews 1:1,2; John 14:26; John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 1 Peter 1:10-12). The New Testament Scriptures contain the complete revealed will of God for mankind today (2 Peter 1:3,4; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Romans 1:16,17).

It is not enough for us just to believe in Christ as Savior, and to be baptized into Him; we must also be desirous of learning, and then be willing to obey, everything He teaches us to do in the Scriptures (Hebrews 5:8,9; James 2:14-24; Luke 14:33; Matthew 10:34-39; Mark 10:28-30).

King David of Israel was a man who had the purpose of heart to always do the Lord's will (1 Kings 14:8; 1 Kings 15:5). It is true that David stumbled along the way and committed some terrible sins; yet God forgave him when he repented, because David did sincerely desire above all else to be pleasing to God.

As Christians, you and I will be very much like David in that we will sin and stumble sometimes. This is because of the struggle between the fleshly desires and the instructions of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures (study Romans 7:14-25; 8:1,14; Galatians 5:13-18). Like David, we must acquire and maintain the desire to know and do God's will above all other considerations (Colossians 3:1-4).

Even a thousand years after David's death the Scriptures said of him: David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

To put into practical terms in daily application of what has been said here, let us consider some of the things that God has taught Christians to do. From the beginning of the Lord's church (Acts 2) Christians were taught to assemble as a congregation (in the locale where they lived) on the first day of the week to worship God and to remember the death and suffering of Christ upon the cross (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16,17). These assemblies are so important to all Christians that if they willfully miss them, they willfully sin against the Lord and endanger their souls (read carefully Hebrews 10:23-30). Notice that to willfully sin causes one to be separated from the blood of Christ that keeps one clean from sin (Hebrews 10:26; 1 John 1:5-7).

Since knowledge of the Lord's Word is the source of one's faith (Romans 10:17), and without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), it follows that if we do not make ourselves available to the teaching on a regular basis, then we will keep ourselves weak spiritually and in danger of being led astray by false teaching (1 John 4:1,6). Missing the worship assemblies and regular Bible study causes us to disobey at least two of God's commandments (Hebrews 10:24,25; Ephesians 5:15-17; 2 Peter 3:14-18). Remember, you deceive yourself if you do not **do** the Lord's will (James 1:18-21; Matthew 7:21).

When one fails to take communion (Lord's Supper) on the first day of the week and also fails to feed upon the Lord's Word, he or she fails to *"eat the flesh of the Son of man and to drink His blood"* (John 6:48-58).

Remember that Esau sold his birthright for a morsel of food; we must not lose our birthright (eternal life in heaven with God) by being negligent in our obedience to God (Hebrews 2:1-4; 12:11-17). Take time to read these Scriptures as you read this article! ⇧

Don L. Norwood preaches for the church in Mason, Texas, U.S.A.

Forgiveness and the Kingdom

Matthew 18:15-35

Gary C. Hampton

The Christian's Response to Others' Sins Against Him

In the normal course of human relations one brother will sin against another. Jesus prescribed that the offended brother should go to the one who sinned against him in an effort to restore his brother. Edersheim tells us this was in stark contrast to the teaching of the Jewish rabbis. They said the offended party must make an effort to correct the problem in the presence of witnesses. Sometimes, they even required such to be repeated three times. Obviously, their concern was not for the condition of the offender. Instead they practiced a form of humiliation. Of course, if the offending party was aware of the offense, he too was obligated to correct the problem (Matthew 5:23,24).

Even if the brother was not restored in the first approach, Jesus directed His followers to take one or two others with him. They could help deal with the matter in an effort to restore the brother. The loving way to handle the matter focused on gaining the lost brother. It was only after taking the matter to the church, without success, that the brother was to be treated as one who refused the knowledge of God.

"How Often Shall My Brother Sin Against Me, And I Forgive Him?"

Peter's response to the Lord's instruction makes it clear he did not understand the heart of love. The rabbis taught "forgiveness should not be extended more than three times," according to Edersheim. So, Peter probably thought he was being generous when he asked if he should forgive his brother up to seven times. However, Jesus' answer shows He was more concerned with His disciples having the type of loving heart that could truly forgive. Then, numbering offenses would be out of the question.

Actually, the bounds of a Christian's forgiveness should be the same as

the bounds to God's forgiveness. After all, those who would be children of God must strive to exhibit the love of their Father (Matthew 5:43-48). Such thinking is apparently behind the parable Jesus went on to tell.

The Marvelous Grace of God!

The King in this parable stands for God. He called in his servants to settle accounts. One was brought before him who owed 10,000 talents. A talent weighed approximately one hundred thirty-one pounds in gold or one hundred seventeen pounds in silver. In other words, the debt owed by the servant was 1.17 million pounds of silver, minimum! The total debt is a tremendous amount!

Edersheim well said, "We are debtors to our heavenly King, Who has entrusted to us the administration of what is His, and which we have purloined or misused, incurring an unspeakable debt, which we can never discharge." He went on to say, "But, if in humble repentance we cast ourselves at His feet, He is ready, in infinite compassion, not only to release us from meet punishment, but — O blessed revelation of the Gospel — to forgive us the debt."

God's wonderful love for mankind can be seen in the king's willingness to forgive such a great debt. The singer of Israel proclaimed, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."* Thus, he proclaimed, *"O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption"* (Psalm 103:12; 130:7). God is willing to take the deep stain of sin and remove it if we will but obey. To those who are willing to repent and be changed by baptism into a new man, He has promised a complete blotting out of sin. To those in Christ who confess, He promised faithfully to forgive (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9).

The Unmerciful Servant

The servant did not appreciate fully what the king had done for him. Such can be seen in his finding a fellow servant who owed him only a small amount and demanding payment. His fellow servant made the same appeal he had made to the king. Yet, he would not even give him time to come up with the money, but cast him into debtors' prison.

His fellow servants' shock at his actions is seen in their reporting the incident to the king. Here was a man who truly could not recognize the beam just removed from his own eye by the mercy of the king. He has now

gone forth to remove the speck in his fellow servant's eye (Matthew 7:1-5). Instead of condemning, he should have been forgiving. After all, those who would be forgiven by God must be forgiving (Matthew 6:12,14,15). Paul told the Ephesian brethren, *"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you"* (Ephesians 4:32).

God's Response To The Unforgiving Heart

When the King heard what had happened, he was angry. He expected his servant to imitate his forgiveness. Because he had not, the master restored his original debt and delivered him to the torturers until he had repaid the whole debt. Imagine the unending goal of repaying such a debt from within prison walls! It would be an eternal process filled with suffering.

Jesus stated, *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."* After all, each of us has sinned in the sight of God. Our sins are worthy of eternal death (Romans 3:10,23; 6:23). Yet, God gave the indescribable gift of His own Son's death on Calvary to set us free (2 Corinthians 9:15; John 3:16-17)! *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). Surely, out of simple gratitude for the release from such a great debt, we should forgive those who sin against us. ✝

Gary C. Hampton is the preacher for the Central church in Valdosta, Georgia, U.S.A.

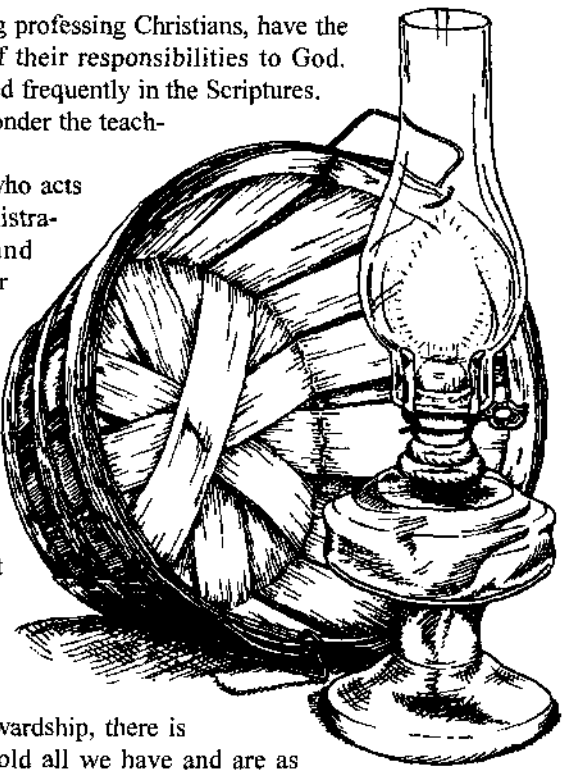
Stewardship

W. Douglass Harris

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Very few, including professing Christians, have the stewardship concept of their responsibilities to God. But this metaphor is used frequently in the Scriptures. We would do well to ponder the teaching of these passages.

A steward is one who acts as supervisor or administrator, as of finances and property, for another or others. A good steward is a trusted servant to whom his master has delegated responsibility to promote his affairs. And such is our relationship to God; we will have to give an account for all that has been entrusted to us, which is much more than most of us realize.



Where there is stewardship, there is also ownership. We hold all we have and are as stewards of God. We are God's possession by creation (Genesis 1:26); by right of redemption, if we are Christians (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7); and by

His providential provisions for us (Acts 14:17; 17:25,28; Matthew 6:26-30). Paul said to the Corinthians, *"Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body"* (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). In the absolute sense, we do not own anything (Psalm 24:1). All time, abilities, and resources have been entrusted to us by the Lord to be employed in His service. Time is a trust from the Lord, and how soon it passes (James 4:13,14; Job 1:21)! Abilities all come from God (Deuteronomy 8:18; Matthew 25:14,15; James 1:17). Resources all come from above (1 Timothy 6:7). The rich fool said, *"**my** fruits and **my** goods."* God said, *"**then** whose shall these things be?"* (Luke 12:16-20).

Thomas Horne expressed it thusly:

> "Our children, relations, friends, honors, houses, lands, and endowments, the goods of nature and fortune, nay, even of grace itself, are only lent. It is misfortune, and our sin, to fancy they are given. We start, therefore, and are angry when the loan is called in. We think ourselves masters, when we are only stewards, and forget that to each of us it will one day be said, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

Stewardship involves: **(1)** Faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2). **(2)** Obedience, or taking orders (Deuteronomy 10:12,13; 11:26-28; Matthew 7:21-23). **(3)** The priority of God's claims upon us over our obligations to family, friends, and the civil state (Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 5:10,11; Acts 5:29).

We give Thee but Thine own,
Whatever the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

May we Thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive,
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,
To Thee our first-fruits give.

— W.W. How

W. Douglass Harris is the editor of the *Caribbean Messenger* and lives in Decatur, Alabama, U.S.A.

A Lion in the Way!

P.K. Varghese

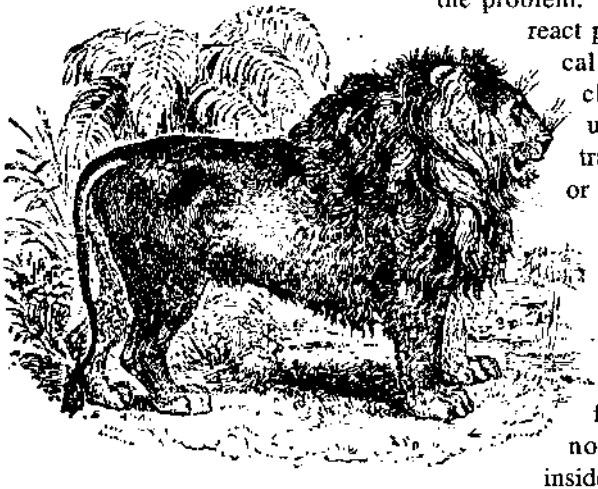
You may have heard many excuses from those who could not or did not fulfill their duties. In order to justify negligence, people often use excuses, in both physical and spiritual matters. When we ask why they have not obeyed the gospel or why they are not attending the assemblies, they begin to tell some of their problems or difficulties. Actually no one can put forward any kind of justification before God for negligence or disobedience.

"The slothful man saith there is a lion in the way: a lion is in the street" (Proverbs 26:13).

How frightening it would be to have a lion in the street! Sometimes here in India a lion does come out of the jungle and causes great alarm. But let us think about what the slothful man said. He is using the lion as an excuse to stay inside and do nothing. How shall we respond to his warning?

If there is a lion in the street, what shall we do? Shall we hide? Shall we run away? No, we shall have to overpower it. The question is "how?"

If a lion is threatening the community we need to capture it or kill it if necessary. To try to hide or to run from the danger would not solve the problem. We need to rise and react properly in this critical moment. That is a challenge set before us. Our text illustrates a feared problem or a time of difficulty. Even if we close our eyes there would be problems in our life. Nobody can avoid that. When the hard problems of life face us, we should not keep ourselves inside a closed door as the



slothful man says. In order to gain victory, efforts and attempts are necessary. We need to make up our minds to be in action.

David did not allow Goliath to scare him away. Zachaeus could say he was too short and in no way was able to see Jesus. Instead he climbed into a tree to overcome the difficulty. Paul did not let a thorn in his flesh defeat him in the service to the Lord. Peter, John and other apostles had very hard times with the Jewish leaders, but they continued deliberately preaching the gospel. Persecution of early Christians did not scare them or cause them to give up their faith. The threat of the death on the cross did not make Jesus quit.

Lots of other encouraging events are in the Bible history of people who did not let a "lion in the street" (hindrances or problems) put them down. If God Almighty is with us we can face any situation. But we need to depend on His power. Since Christ could overcome the world, as Christians we will also be able to overcome it with His power.

Take notice of the following verses which are truly "lion killing."

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not His own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yes rather that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us.

"Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written for thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

"Nay in all these things we are more than conquerers through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

Verses like these are strengthening to us. We must never let our fear or excuses defeat us — and certainly there is no room for laziness. We must be positive in our approach to God's will. The reward is great if we act as God desires. ✞

P.K. Varghese is the Malayalam radio speaker and editor of the Malayalam *The Bible Truth* magazine in Trivandrum, India.

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Tom Holland

When our Lord was on this earth, identifying with us in an earthly body, He was very sensitive to the pain people were experiencing. He had time to go to the home of Jarius because his little twelve year old girl had died. *Jesus cared.* He came to the tomb of Lazarus and stood in the midst of sorrow. *Jesus wept.* He paused on His journey for the triumphant entry into Jerusalem because a blind man was there, beseeching the Lord to give him his eyesight. *Jesus restored.*

In anticipation of His imminent trial, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and coronation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus reached out to His apostles in loving reassurance. He was acutely aware of the impending sorrow they would experience and He wanted to prepare them for the occasion. So He lovingly said to them, *"Let not your heart be troubled . . . ."* (John 14:1).

Has your heart ever been troubled? Physical illness may trouble your heart. The illness of a dear loved one may trouble our heart. Problems of life — financial, marital, personal, employment, and various relationships may bring us disappointment, discouragement, and possible despondency. Does anyone live very long on earth and escape pain, sorrow, and disappointment?

How does the Lord who still cares (1 Peter 5:7) tell us *how* to deal with trouble? Does He recommend *denial,* a type of dishonest pretension that "all is well"? Does He urge *escapism* in drugs, alcohol, pleasure, food, work, lust, or suicide? Does He tell us to become *pessimistic,* even *cynical,* about life and to become *bitter, critical, caustic,* and *blaming?*

Our loving Lord gives the power to cope with trouble: **faith!** *". . . Believe in God, believe also in me"* (John 14:1). When we follow our Savior's direction then we believe in a God who is our Father (John 14:2), a Father who knows and loves His people, a Father who cares and is involved in the lives of

His children, and a loving Father who can take the trouble His children experience in the world (John 16:33) and providentially work everything for the good of His people (Romans 8:28). If God could take all of the trouble a young man named Joseph experienced and turn it into a blessing for him and his family, and if God could take all the shame and suffering of Golgotha and turn the death of His Son into potential salvation of mankind, don't you think He can effectively handle the trouble of His beloved people today? No wonder an inspired man would instruct God's people to *"cast all of your care upon Him, for He careth for you"* (1 Peter 5:7). ✝

Tom Holland is a writer and preacher in Brentwood, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Times of Stillness

When the rush of life o'ertakes me,
And my soul for quiet seeks,
When my mind is full of pressures
That pursue me through the week,
I have a little haven
Where I find my heart's content,
And the quiet that surrounds me there
Is truly heaven sent.

For we all need times of stillness;
To relax and just unwind,
And let go of small resentments
That clutter up the mind.
So, I seek the soothing quiet,
To my haven, safe I trod,
And alone there in the silence,
I feel very close to God!

—Jean E. Moore

A Call to Holiness

Tony W. Boyd

The Christian life is many things to many people. One aspect of true Christianity stands out from all the rest. That is the attribute of holiness. Holiness is not a natural part of our lives. We do not inherit it from our parents, nor do we gain it by some form of "osmosis" by simply being around those whom we respect as holy.

The life of holiness is begun by being obedient children. *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance"* (1 Peter 1:14). This obedience is manifested as much by the things we do not do as by the things we do. Notice Peter's negative statement in the verse above. The holy person does not base his life on worldly desire or ignorance of God's will, but as Paul says it: *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what (is) that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:2).

As children of God, we are called to live a life of holiness. *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:15,16). True holiness comes from being in the proper relationship with God. The closer we are to Him, the more holiness we can develop in our own lives.

This holiness is given strength and motivation by our knowledge and assurance that we have been purchased (redeemed) by the precious, incorruptible blood of Jesus, God's requirement of death for our sin (Romans 6:23; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 1 John 2:1,2).

Our personal holiness is encouraged even more by our awareness that this life is only temporary, and that the life which really counts is the one that we live for God. *"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness . . ."* (2 Peter 3:11).

To summarize, we find that the Christian's life is to be lived separated from the world. God is holy and has called us out of the world, into a life worthy of the sacrifice given to make it possible for us to be with Him in heaven. Let us live today as God's holy ones so that we can live eternally with Him. ✞

Tony W. Boyd works with the Jadwin congregation near Salem, Missouri, U. S. A.

What Christ Said

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."
He said, "No, walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black;
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back —
"There is more," He said, "there
is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,
And bogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone!"

I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given,
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of
your Guide!"

I cast one look at the fields,
And set my face to the town:
He said, "My child, do you yield?
Will you give up the flowers for
the Crown?

Then into His hand went mine,
And into my heart came He,
And I walked in a light divine,
The paths I had feared to see.

— George McDonald

What is sin?

"Sin" is out-of-fashion these days! Hardly ever is it mentioned anymore. Instead, people are said to be "sick" or to have a "disease," and their wrongs are excused away.

But sin has not vanished. In fact, the world's tolerant and permissive attitude toward sin has encouraged its rampant growth, so that it eats humanity's heart like a cancer. And, like cancer, it must be cut away from our souls if we are to live, spiritually.

What is sin? *". . . sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4). Not only is it sin when citizens violate the civil law (Romans 13:1,2), but sin is the violation of God's moral and spiritual laws, as written in the Bible. From the beginning of man's existence, these moral and spiritual laws have been true.

God forbids lying, stealing, laziness, adultery, homosexuality and other sensual immorality, greed, abuse, murder — and He calls these things sins, saying that all who do such things, *"shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (Revelation 21:8).

Next: Who sins?

Striving for Sterling

Betty Tucker

The Random House College Dictionary gives this meaning to the word **sterling**: "thoroughly excellent." We all desire to achieve this **thorough excellence** in our homes, our family, our manner of life. Therefore, we must somehow undergird every facet of life with a quality of love that merits use of this superlative.

We do not want to live in such a way that the following little story could relate to our lives. A man had died, and the preacher was praising him with flowery words. The wife sat on the front seat of the little church building with her many children gathered about her. After listening to the minister's continued eulogy, she whispered to her oldest son, "Clem, go up there and see if it's your dad in that casket."

Where can we find the secret to help us attain a **thoroughly excellent** love? We cannot depend upon the daily newspaper or the talk show hosts to help us. Marriage counselors offer advice, but from them we hear conflicting views. As usual, when we search for answers to the deeper mysteries of life, we go to **the book our mothers read**.

Gleanings from Inspiration

In the second chapter of the Bible we read that God is the designer of marriage. *"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (Genesis 2:18).

Later, in the New Testament, the Pharisees tested Christ on the subject of divorce. Look again at Matthew 19:3-9, as this drama unfolds. In verse 5, Jesus says, *" . . . For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they*

are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

This clearly teaches that marriage is a divine institution. God created the marriage . . . God did the joining. It is to be a lifetime contract. It is God's beautiful plan for man and woman, designed to bring happiness.

Sometimes, a marriage partner is unfaithful and betrays his/her mate. Read further in chapter 10 of Matthew, verse 9, as Jesus delivers this serious admonition: *"And, I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."* Paul lists a number of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10, among which we find adultery. He says that they who so live "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Turning in our Bibles to Ephesians, chapter 5, we search for practical guidance in this business of marriage. Here, we find these instructions:

1) *"the husband is the head of the wife"* (verse 23).

2) *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands"* (verse 22).

3) the wife see that she *"reverence her husband"* (verse 33).

4) *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"* (verse 25).

5. *"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies"* (verse 28).

If the husband loves the wife as God decreed, she can easily submit herself to him, and they will "live happily ever after." Their love will epitomize that elusive quality for which we seek . . . theirs will be **that sterling (thoroughly excellent) marriage.** ✝

Betty Tucker is the wife of a gospel preacher and lives in Linden, Tennessee, U.S.A.

"Keep one thing always in mind. It is far better to seek counseling to solve the problems in the home, than to run to the divorce courts to destroy the home. When this happens, everyone suffers, but the children are hurt worse."

— Charles Burch

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN. . . .

Her Power Over Her Children

Betty Burton Choate

Rachel had said to Jacob, *"Give me children, or else I die!"* (Genesis 30:1) How Rachel had longed for a child of her own as she saw her sister, Leah, with her little boys. Fervently she prayed, asking God for a son. *"Then God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'God has taken away my reproach,' So she called his name Joseph, and said, 'The Lord shall add to me another son'"* (Genesis 30:22-24).

We don't know how old Joseph was when Benjamin was born, and Rachel died after giving him the name, Benoni, 'Son of my Sorrow'. Nothing is said in the scriptures about the training of Joseph during his early formative years.

Was Jacob the one who kept this favored son at his side, teaching him about God? Surely he must have told not only Joseph but all of his sons of the wondrous times when God had shown special favor in talking directly to him. How vividly Jacob must have described his dream at Bethel when, as a young man running from the anger of his brother, Esau, he had wearily pillowed his head on a rock in a lonely place. While he slept he saw the ladder stretched between earth and heaven with glorious angels ascending and descending upon it. And there, standing above it, was the Presence of God Himself, saying to Jacob, *"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. . ."* (Genesis 28:13).

Jacob must have told them, too, of the cause of his limp, when he had wrestled all night with a Man, and had prevailed. Then the Man, as God, had promised that he would also prevail with men. He had changed Jacob's name to 'Israel' — Prince with God. This encounter had given him the courage to move forward and meet his brother Esau, trusting that God would be with him and protect him.

But when we see the difference between Joseph's character and that of his brothers — sons of Leah and the handmaids — we must realize

that part of that tremendous difference was surely the influence of Rachel, who had prayed nearly seven years for a son. She had long agonized over her barrenness, her empty arms. Having thought and dreamed and planned all of those years of having a son, we cannot suppose she would have taken lightly the spiritual responsibilities of motherhood. When, out of twelve sons and one daughter fathered by Jacob, we see only one with the living faith — the pure understanding of God's role in his life — and that one was the only one who would have had Rachel to teach him, then we can safely conclude that Joseph gained the fullness of his faith in large part from his mother.

In our understanding of human nature, we surely can imagine that Jacob poured out his heart to Rachel, the wife he loved. Every word God had spoken to him, every growth of faith, must have been shared fully with her. Then we can almost hear little Joseph, asking for a story before going to sleep, or as he and Rachel walked or rode together the long miles of a nomad's life: "Mommy, tell me about the beautiful ladder from heaven. What did God mean when He told my father, 'I will be with you and will keep you. . . ?'" or, "Mommy, I want to hear again the words God spoke to my father when he was alone and afraid." or, "Did you really pray for me for many years? Did God really hear your words and give me to you?"

Within Joseph's young heart the words, the lessons of faith, took root and grew. They were there to sustain him during the long years of exile in pagan Egypt. The victim of false accusations, of slavery, and of years of imprisonment, never did Joseph forget that God was with him, bearing him up and enabling him to overcome all that was plotted against him (Genesis 45:7,8).

As mothers in today's world, quietly teaching faith from day to day by words and by our own living in faithfulness to God, we can equip our children to face life and to overcome. ✝

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate, Editor-in-Chief of *The Voice of Truth International*.

To the 3rd and 4th Generation

David Tarbet

I have wondered about the statement found in Exodus 20:5 that God visits *"the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation."* There must be significance to the fact that God limits His wrath to the "third and fourth" generation, rather than extending it to the fifth, sixth, or tenth. I have decided that the significance lies in this: three or four generations live simultaneously, each influencing and affecting the other. The sinful behavior of one generation is reproduced in all generations contemporary with it. Children look to their parents, grandchildren look to their grandparents, and great-grandchildren look to their great-grandparents as role models. Each generation picks up the bad behavior patterns of the previous generation. Thus, God is justified in bringing His wrath upon the third and fourth generation because all of these generations imitate each other, participating in the same sins.

If sinful behavior has such an on-going and powerful influence upon children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, righteous behavior can also have a powerful influence. It is a serious mistake for parents to think their spiritual influence is limited to the formative years when their children are living "at home." The truth is, parents never stop having an influence for good in the lives of their children — even after they become adults. Have you stopped to think that grandparents have important godly influence over their grandchildren, too? And great-grandparents as well!

That is why all of us simply must continue to be faithful to the Lord and His church! The example we set will likely determine whether our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren are involved in the kingdom. In other words, the **job of parents is never finished**. They just keep on making an impact for good or for evil, long after their children have left home. So, be faithful to the very end — the lessons you teach by your faithfulness will be felt for a long, long time after you are gone! ✝

David Tarbet is the preacher for the 16th & Pile congregation in Clovis, New Mexico, U.S.A.

Train Up a Child

Jack Harriman

The wise man Solomon said, *"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6).

Training up a child in the way he should go implies that there is a wrong way as well as a right way. It also implies that if a child is to *go* the right way, he must be *trained* to go that way. Solomon said, *"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child"* (Proverbs 22:15), and *"A child left to himself will bring his mother to shame"* (Proverbs 29:15).

If we are to train our children in the way they should go, we must know the way ourselves. Jesus said, *"If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch"* (Matthew 15:14). Obviously, if we do not know the right way, we will not be able to train our children in the right way.

If we are to train our children in the way they should go, we must be going that way ourselves. The old saying "like mother-like daughter" and "like father-like son" is not far wrong. If we lead them to believe that money and pleasure are the most important things in life, they will. If we lead them to believe that physical things are more important than spiritual

things, they will. Our values will become their values.

If our children are to go the way they should go, then they must be trained to go that way. The training of them requires true and constant teaching. We must fill our children's minds with all that is right in respect to both God and man so that they will not be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). Training also involves their practice — repetition. It is not enough just to instruct them, they must also practice it. Fathers and mothers must see that they do, so long as they are under our authority.

Do you know the way? Are you going that way? Are you training your children in that way? ✝

Jack Harriman preaches for the Center Street congregation in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U.S.A.

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism, *He learns to condemn.*
If a child lives with hostility, *He learns to fight.*
If a child lives with ridicule, *He learns to be shy.*
If a child lives with shame, *He learns to be guilty.*
If a child lives with encouragement, *He learns confidence.*
If a child lives with praise, *He learns to appreciate.*
If a child lives with fairness, *He learns justice.*
If a child lives with security, *He learns to have faith.*
If a child lives with approval, *He learns to like himself.*
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, *He learns to find love in the world.*

—Author Unknown

Fathers, Spend Time With Your Children

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

". . . Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord . . ." (Ephesians 6:4). Some of the most precious moments I spent with my children were fishing times or mending a broken toy. My only regret is there were not enough of those times.

I would suspect that most fathers, if they had it to do all over again, would want to spend more time with their children. Times have become more hectic than ever. It is easy to over-commit. We must learn to weed out the trivial and prioritize the important. Delores Curran, in her excellent book, **Traits of Healthy Families**, says that one of the greatest enemies of family life is lack of time together. One study found that fathers spend ten minutes a week with their children.

It used to be that the father was much more available. But, times have changed. The family worked and played together then, but now life takes us in all directions. This means that a conscientious, deliberate effort must be made for time together. It won't just happen — it must be planned.

Several years ago, Dr. Charlie Shedd conducted a contest called "One Neat Dad." Contestants were asked to recommend their dads. Here is the list of the ten most appreciated qualities in fathers:

1. He takes time for me.
2. He listens to me.
3. He plays with me.
4. He lets me help him.
5. He invites me to go places with him.
6. He treats my mother well.
7. He lets me say what I think.
8. He is nice to my friends.
9. He only punishes me when I deserve it.
10. He is not afraid to admit when he is wrong.

Without time together we become strangers in our own homes. Being a father is a tough job, and by the time some of us learned how to be one, we were suddenly grandfathers. ✝

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. preaches for the Walnut Street church in Dickson, Tennessee, U.S.A.

What Shall I Give My Son?

What shall you give to one small boy? A glamourous game, a tinseled toy?
A Barlow knife, a puzzle pack, a train that runs on a curving track?
A picture book, a real live pet? No, there's plenty of time
for such things yet.

Give him a day for his very own — just one small boy and his dad alone.
A walk in the woods, a romp in the park, a fishing trip from dawn to dark.
Give the gift that only you can — the companionship of his Old Man!
Games are outgrown, and toys decay — but he'll never forget if you
"give him a day."

— Author Unknown

Family Values

John Gipson

It is time to stress the need for parental affection. The Bible enjoins aged women to teach the younger *"to love their children"* (Titus 2:4). It is not sufficient to provide them with a house, food, and clothing. We owe them a warm and tender attachment. Edmund Burke relates that J. J. Rousseau would not keep his children in his house, but sent them to be brought up in an orphanage; and then remarks that "bears love their young and lick them into shape, but bears are not philosophers." Some children do not receive from their parents the affection that a mother bear gives her cubs.

Children must learn to honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12). Wise parents will recognize the authority vested in them by God, and will not relinquish control of their children. Living unrestrained is unfair

because a young person's welfare is never secured by removing the bridle and turning him loose in the open field.

Understanding that children are products of their education, Solomon said, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). And remember, it is impossible to rear upright children with low-down standards among parents. Maybe that is why Josh Billings said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and walk there yourself once in a while."

It takes two to bring a child into the world, and it takes two to give a child all that he needs. Single parents can only do so much. Ideally, the father and mother will work together in home training.

Building bridges, writing books, and splitting the atom are not more essential to society or more difficult than the matter of meeting our obligations to our children.

Remember, your child deserves the best! ✞

John Gipson is the preacher for the Sixth and Izard church in Little Rock, Arkansas, U.S.A.

Mary Had a Little Boy

Mary had a little boy; his soul was white as snow;
He never went to Bible class 'cause Mary wouldn't go.
He never heard the words of Christ, that thrill the childish mind.
While other children went to class, this boy was left behind.
And as he grew from babe to youth, she saw to her dismay
A soul that once was snowy white become a dingy gray.
Realizing he was lost, she tried to win him back
But now a soul that was once white had turned an ugly black.
Mary changed, confessed her sins, and went to worship, too,
Then she begged the preacher, "Is there something you can do?"
The preacher tried and failed, and said, "We're just too far behind.
I tried to tell you years ago, but you would pay no mind."
And so another soul was lost, that once was white as snow.
Bible classes would have helped — but Mary wouldn't go.

— Author Unknown

The Soul of a Child

(Author Unknown)

The soul of a child is the loveliest flower
That grows in the garden of God.
It climbs from weakness to knowledge and power
To the sky from the clay and the clod.

To beauty and sweetness it grows under care,
Neglected, 'tis ragged and wild;
'Tis a plant that is tender and wonderously fair,
The sweet wistful soul of a child.

Be tender, O gardener, and give it its share
Of moisture, of warmth and of light;
And let it not lack for painstaking care
To protect it from frost and blight.

A glad day shall come when
its bloom shall unfold.
It will seem that an angel
has smiled,
Reflecting a beauty and
sweetness untold
In the sensitive soul of a
child.

In the breast of a bulb is a
promise of spring;
In the little blue egg is a bird
that will sing;
In the soul of a seed is the
hope of the sod;
In the soul of a child is the
kingdom of God.

Worship and You

Bill McFarland

All of us need the strength which comes from worshipping God together. There is something about it which moves us in His direction and urges us on in love and good works.

But we also long for our meetings together to be occasions of true and spiritual worship. Dull and empty ceremonies neither honor God nor encourage His children. We need the experience of offering up spiritual sacrifices to Him.

What can a person do to help make our worship together be what it needs to be?

Prepare before you go. Appearing before God to offer Him glory and honor and praise is not something which can be done without thought and effort. The heart cannot express what it does not contain. Fill it ahead of time with gratitude and humility and praise. Set your priorities and plan to be alert enough to pour out your heart to God.

Participate while you are there. Worship is an active word. No one else can do it for you. Examine your heart. Offer yourself to God. Pray fervently. Lift up your voice in praise. Meditate upon the Word. Follow the line of thought. Draw near to God. There is no way to do any of this without being actively engaged in worship.

Practice when you leave. Let what you have done in worship make a difference in your life. Bridle your tongue. Keep yourself unspotted from the world. Act with compassion for the helpless and downtrodden. In so doing you will prove that your faith is not in vain. And you will discover that worship prepares you for life as life prepares you for worship.

When it comes to making worship more meaningful, **you** are a key ingredient. May each one of us accept his or her responsibility in this matter. ⇧

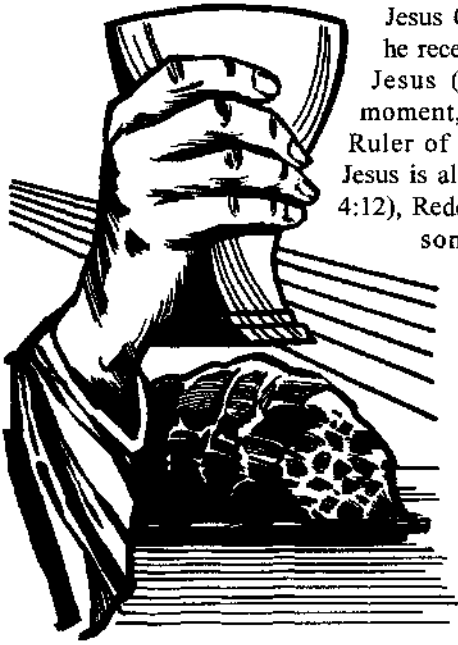
Bill McFarland preaches for the National and High church in Springfield, Missouri, U.S.A.

Worship in Communion

David W. Chadwell

When a person becomes a Christian, he is literally born anew. There is great similarity between spiritual birth and physical birth. At the moment of physical birth, the baby instantly is a person and a member of a family. At the moment of spiritual birth, the spiritual infant immediately is a new person and a member of God's family, the church.

From the moment of spiritual birth through baptism, the Christian establishes a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every spiritual blessing he received and will receive is through Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). From that moment, Jesus is his Lord, the literal Ruler of his life (1 Timothy 6:13-16). Jesus is also that Christian's Savior (Acts 4:12), Redeemer (Ephesians 1:7), and personal Intercessor before God (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus sanctifies and justifies him (1 Corinthians 1:30).



Only because of Jesus, one is God's son or daughter. Only because of Jesus, he or she can be saved. The Christian exists because of Jesus. Were it not for Jesus, one could not be a Christian, and one could not be a part of God's family. Therefore, every Christian must

ceaselessly be aware of his or her personal dependence on Jesus. Every Christian must ceaselessly be grateful for all Jesus did and is doing for him or her.

Jesus designated the specific means for the Christian to continually remember his dependence upon the Lord and Christ. That reminder is the worship memorial called the Lord's Supper, or Communion.

Form and Purpose

All who are dedicated to being simply Christians are committed to understanding the New Testament's teachings about the **form** for the Lord's Supper. Dedication to being simply a Christian requires one to consider carefully the instructions about observing Communion.

However, communing with Jesus Christ through the Lord's Supper requires much more than following correct procedures. Communing with Jesus Christ must also achieve its proper purpose in the hearts and minds of individual Christians. Even when the Communion is observed in its technically correct form, it is meaningless and void of blessing if it does not achieve Jesus' purposes in the heart and mind. The Lord's Supper is not a ritual to be observed. This deeply worshipful act declares the Christian's faith in, and expresses his gratitude for, the crucified Savior.

What are the proper purposes of the Lord's Supper?

(1) The Lord's Supper moves the Christian to remember that Jesus gave His physical body and blood in a sacrificial death (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:24,25). Eating the bread reminds the Christian that Jesus surrendered His sinless body. Drinking grape juice reminds the Christian that Jesus poured out His sinless blood.

1 Corinthians 11:23,24 provides excellent insight into the purposes of Communion. The Corinthian Christians so abused and misdirected the Lord's Supper that it promoted and sustained congregational division (1 Corinthians 11:18-22). Because they abused its form and purpose, Paul stated how it was to be taken and for what purposes.

(2) In observing the Lord's Supper, the Christian declares his faith in Jesus' death (verse 26). Communion states his faith in the fact that the Son of God came in the flesh and sacrificed His physical life. It happened!

In that act of worship, **(3) the Christian declares his faith in the fact that the crucified Jesus lives and *is coming again*** *(verse 26)*. God raised Him from the dead! He shall certainly return! Through the Communion the Christian confi-

dently looks back to Jesus' death and looks ahead to Jesus' return.

By taking Communion, **(4) the Christian affirms that he shares a family bond with fellow Christians** (verse 33). In worship through Communion, he affirms his special relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with all other men and women who also have entered Christ. The Lord's Supper is a personal act of worship as the Christian communes with Christ. It is a congregational act of worship as all the Christians confirm their relationship with each other in Christ.

Paul also stressed the seriousness of worship through Communion. If a Christian takes Communion in violation of its purposes, he or she acquires the guilt of a participant in Jesus' death (verse 27). In sober awareness of the significance of Communion, the partaker should make a self-examination. He should examine his heart, his attitudes, his spiritual focus, and his reasons for eating the bread and drinking the grape juice (verse 28). The failure to take Communion in a worthy manner results in spiritual weakness, spiritual sickness, and spiritual death (verse 30).

The Lord's Supper must never be taken habitually. It is not a meaningless formality that occurs as a ritual in public worship. It is an intensely meaningful expression of worship. Proper observance of the Lord's Supper requires the Christian to take it correctly in form and in purpose. Even if a congregation gives great attention to the Communion's correct form, Christ is still offended if the members do not take it for correct purposes. Christians must never forget that Communion is equally the worship of the congregation and the worship of the individual. If the individuals present do not personally commune with Christ, congregational worship through Communion does not occur. ✝

David W. Chadwell is a preacher and writer in Oxford, Mississippi, U.S.A.

"Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:24-29).

Worship, a Habit?

Ron Stough

Often when encouraging an unfaithful Christian to return to worship with the saints, the reply will be, "Oh, I know I ought to be there, but I guess I've just gotten out of the habit. Maybe one of these days I'll get started again."

Regarding worship as a habit seems to put it on the same level as brushing our teeth or taking a walk. Until we view worship as an integral part of our daily lives, it may be easy for us to break the "habit" of worship.

The purpose of our worship is to honor and magnify the God of the universe. This is going to require a love, reverence, and devotion in our hearts each day of the week. Only when we live with God daily, and know Him intimately, will we feel the desire to exalt and honor Him on the Lord's Day. A deep understanding of the love that sent Jesus to the cross for our sins will elevate worship from a habit to a privilege.

The joyful Psalmist urged, *"Exalt ye the Lord, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy"* (Psalm 99:5). We serve a holy God! Our souls cry out for a spiritual fellowship with our Creator — the One in whose image we were created. We must cultivate that desire with knowledge, self-discipline, and training so that we, like David, can say, *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord"* (Psalm 122:1).

Ron Stough is a gospel preacher in Duncan, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the gospel of John, chapter eight.

1. The strong discussion of this chapter takes place in what setting? (V. 1)

2. How did the scribes and Pharisees try to trap Jesus? (v. 3)

3. What response did Jesus make? (V. 6-8)

4. Why did the accusers leave? (V. 9)

5. Jesus said, "I am ___ _____ _ ___ _____. He who _____ __ ____ ___ ____ __ _____, but have the light of life." (V. 12)

6. Who are the two who bear witness of Jesus? (V. 17,18)

7. If they had recognized Jesus for who He really was, they would have _____ ___ _____ ____. (V. 19)

8. Jesus said, "I am going away. . . . Where I go ___ _____ ____." (V. 21)

9. Why did He say they would not be able to come where He would be? (V. 38)

10. Why would they die in their sins? (V. 24)

11. What message did Jesus speak to the world? (V. 26)

12. Jesus promised, "When you ____ __ ___ ___ _ ___, then you will know that __ __ __, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as __ _____ _____ __, __ _____ _____ _____." (V. 28)

13. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ___ __ ___ ___ ___ _____, ___ __ ____ _____ ____ __ ____." (v. 32)

14. ". . . whoever commits sin __ __ _____ __ ___." (V. 34)

15. His listeners said that they were freeborn, being ___ _____ __ _____. (V. 33)

16. Jesus said, "Your _____ _____ _____ to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." (V. 56)

17. When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," what did the people do, and why? (V. 57-59)

[See Inside of back cover for answers.]

A Missionary-Team Couple

Randal Matheny

The principle works equally in the world, in the family or in the congregation. "Diversity for unity." The phrases "diversity but unity" or "unity in diversity" lack understanding of the principle. God created diversity in order to arrive at unity. Each one has been given his gift to complement the other, in order that we all might have everything we need.

The world has emphasized diversity so much that it has lost the idea of unity. Between man and woman, the feminist movement exaggerates women's rights and equality. It is a reaction of the oppressed against their oppressors, of the worldly against the worldly.

For this reason, we are encouraged to see a couple who, instead of fighting for power in the family, cooperate in the interests of the Kingdom of God. Priscilla and Aquila worked together in harmony, blessed by the Lord to carry forward His work.

Receiving Paul in Corinth.

We first encounter the couple when the apostle Paul arrives in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:1-2). They had been expelled from Rome, along with other Jews, by imperial decree. They arrived in Corinth and took up their tentmaking profession. Paul works and lives with them. Imagine having the apostle living in your house! During this time he even receives a vision from the Lord (Acts 18:9,10).

Priscilla and Aquila participate in Paul's work and, after a year and a half, when Paul departs for Syria, they accompany him (verses 18,19). Arriving in Ephesus, Paul finds it expedient to leave them there. Here they find more work in the Lord.

When the preacher Apollos arrives in Ephesus, lacking some

vital information still, Priscilla and Aquila *"took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately"*(Acts 18:26). These two had taken advantage of Paul's presence to learn and study further about God's will. Now they are able to teach others. (Paul was practicing what he recommended to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:2.) When Apollos expresses a desire to pass through Achaia, whence Priscilla and Aquila had come, they *"encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. On his arrival he greatly helped those who through grace had become believers"* (Acts 18:27).

Paul later returns to Ephesus, from where he writes the first letter to the Corinthians. Priscilla and Aquila send greeting to the Corinthian church: *"Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 16:19). They had opened their home to a group of disciples for their meetings. Their hospitality and desire to contribute to the spiritual work caused them to participate with and dedicate themselves intensely to their brethren in various ways.

Back to Rome.

When Paul writes the letter to the Romans, Priscilla and Aquila are back in Rome. The greeting he sends to this couple is warm and extensive: *"Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Greet also the church in their house"* (Romans 16:3,4).

These two risked their own lives (possibly in Corinth, Acts 18) in order to participate in God's mission of carrying the Gospel to the nations. Paul gratefully recognizes the important role they play in the Kingdom.

By mentioning this couple here, Paul recognizes the vital work they are doing in Rome as well. Apparently, the two felt the need to return to Rome for spiritual motives. It is not known if they left Rome as Christians or were converted by Paul in Corinth. However that may be, they are back, either to preach the Gospel to the Romans for the first time, or to finish a work they began which had been interrupted by Caesar's decree.

In Ephesus, Again.

Toward the end of his ministry, Paul writes his second letter to Timothy, who was working still in Ephesus. We find Priscilla and Aquila again in this city. *"Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus"* (2 Timothy 4:19). Perhaps Paul had sent them

back to Ephesus in order to develop that work together with Timothy. Regardless, they were always ready to move, not only once, but several times, to serve the cause of Christ. Together with other cooperating brethren, they formed a dynamic "spiritual network" of laborers throughout the Empire.

There is speculation as to why Priscilla is named before her husband in four of the six citations. Scholars suppose that she was perhaps the more active Christian of the two, or that she was a Roman citizen of a higher class than he, or that she was better known in the church.

The speculation over the order of their names points up again our tendency to give preference to one or the other. What may be seen in the life of this couple, however, is a unity of purpose that directs them to work hard in the Kingdom. These two agree about this work. They want to work. They were willing to give themselves to the cause of Christ and to the needs of the brethren.

Multiply Their Tribe!

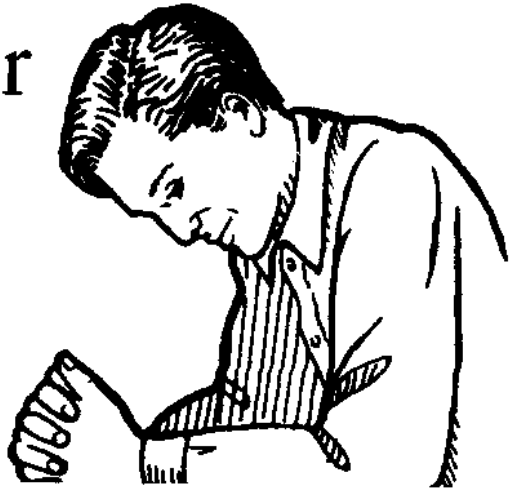
What a marvelous couple, dedicated to the work and to the Lord! How much they did for the Kingdom! They evangelized, began new works, offered hospitality, relocated several times for spiritual motives, showed they could be counted on in hard times, learned from the experienced, taught and corrected the less experienced, encouraged preaching trips. On top of all this, they worked in the profession as a means of making their spiritual labor possible.

May the Lord work in the lives of other couples today to take on this commitment. May we sidestep the modern slug-outs about rights, dedicate ourselves heart and soul to our marriage partners and agree between husband and wife that the Lord deserves our submission, our praise, our gratitude and our very best labor. ✝

Randal Matheny has worked in Brazil for 10 years and edits *Edificação* (Edification) *Magazine*.

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in'" (Matthew 25:34,35).

Pray for Open Doors



Dayton Keesee

How ironic that Paul in prison was the one to plead, *"Praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds"* (Colossians 4:3).

Why is that ironic? First, because Paul was still hungering for open doors even in prison, while so many brethren do not pray for open doors even though they are free to go with the Gospel. Have you, as a person free to go, been praying for open doors?

Second, Paul wanted those open doors so he could "speak the mystery of Christ," which was the very cause for his being "in bonds." Who would ask that prayers be prayed so one could do what caused him to go to jail? **Paul did!** What proof that gives to the importance he placed upon finding receptive hearts (open doors) to hear Christ's message. Is getting the story of the Savior to some receptive heart that important to you? Are you praying about it? Do you ask others to pray for you in that regard?

Third, isn't it ironic that the very man who shared the Gospel with souls from "Jerusalem to Illyricum" (Romans 15:19) was the one who sought more open doors? If anyone had a right to let up, Paul, the imprisoned missionary, did. After planting congregations in Asia and Europe, Paul's yearning to tell the story to others echoes a challenge to us all. Truly, Paul made it his aim to *"preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named,*

that I might not build upon another man's foundation" (Romans 15:20). Do you pray to reach someone who has not heard the truth?

Fourth, it is ironic that Paul, who wrote half of the New Testament, wanted people to pray to God so that when he spoke the Gospel he would *"make it manifest, as I ought to speak"* (Colossians 4:4). If he needed God's help when he taught the Truth, surely you and I dare not enter into a study without seeking Divine help (see James 1:5; 1 Peter 3:15-17).

Paul's prayer and plea are proof that he realized there are open doors out there. It is so important that we contact people at "a teachable moment." When the prodigal "came to himself," he was ready to do what was right (Luke 15:17-21). When the eunuch was reading what he did not understand, he was ready for Philip to teach him (Acts 8:29-39).

Norman Gipson told of a man he taught who was also ready. As they studied, that man asked a question which brother Gipson turned into a heart-wrenching song, "Where Have You Been For So Long?" On one occasion Larry Billingsley and I studied with a young mother with tears in her eyes, who identified her hungering concern for Truth by stating as we were leaving, "Don't you dare leave me alone." As an "open door," she wanted another lesson from God's Word.

Do you yearn for such souls to be given God's all-sufficient Word (2 Timothy 3:16,17)?

God knows where the open doors are (John 2:25; Hebrews 4:13), and He has promised if anyone desires to do His will, that person will be able to discern truth from error, when he hears it (John 7:17). His glorious love and the human hunger need one element to bring the evangelistic triangle together — one of the Lord's spokesmen praying to God for open doors! Has God heard you pray for an open door lately? Why do you wait, dear brother or sister? Why do you tarry so long? ✝

Dayton Keesee is a gospel preacher working with the Eastside congregation in Midwest City, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

You can learn a lot from the Bible; you can learn still more practicing it.

Seed Famine

Amos 8:11

Danny Cline

Its setting is famine-stricken Africa. The thin woman with her bloated baby on her back bends over to bury seed, later to chop weeds, futilely tending the invisible crop again and again — year after year — with no ready expectation of harvesting anything.

But just in case it rains this season . . .

" . . . when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest" (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Yet, lots of seasons we seed-planters of the Word of Almighty God see little promise of anything sprouting, much less developing toward reaping time.

Dilemma: Should we quit planting?

Without a seedtime it doesn't matter at all if it rains.

But after a seeding, what if it rains?!

We plant . . . we water . . . **but it is God who causes the growth** (1 Corinthians 3:6).

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season . . . with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2).

" . . . a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord" is the worst of all droughts (Amos 8:11). Even a famine of growing cannot compare to a famine for planting.

So we go on seeding — just in case it rains! ✝

Danny Cline preaches the Gospel in Blue Ridge, Georgia, U.S.A.

Evangelism

Owen Cosgrove

We have heard the word "evangelism" many times. The word literally means "good-news-izing," or telling God's good news to the world. The word suggests at least five basic concepts needed to win others to Christ, and when these five things are done, evangelism will work.

1. Effort. Evangelize is a verb — an action word — something that is done. God's Word is like a seed, with unlimited potential, but it must be propagated if it is going to produce.

2. Friendship. Without compromising and without browbeating, evangelism is an effort of winsomeness — of winning another to the Lord. This cannot be done by hatefulness and antagonism. The one who is to be sought and won must realize something of the love and the care on the part of the soul-winner.

3. Faith. Weak faith in the teacher cannot stir strong faith in the learner. It takes fire to set fire, and the one who believes and teaches in question marks rather than exclamation points cannot be a soul-winner.

4. Simplicity. The world is already confused. People are not seeking the questionable, the murky, and the confusing things of life. They long for simple truths that give meaning and order to life and which give hope. Jesus did simple, direct, forceful teaching. *"He taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes"* (Matthew 7:29).

5. Joy. The very words "good news" suggest joy. Coleridge said that in order to write good poetry, one must have inner joy. In order to do anything well, one must have that delight and happiness of discovery, direction, and determination.

Evangelism is not only the greatest need of the world today, it is the greatest need of the church. Nothing enlivens a church more than this great duty given by the Lord, and nothing retards the church more than the neglect of this sacred responsibility.

Christ's clear commission is to evangelize. And it all starts with one individual determining to win one soul to Christ. ✝

Owen Cosgrove is a writer and preaches for the Northside congregation in Waxahachie, Texas, U.S.A.

The Example of Job

Jack W. Carter

Usually we think of patience when we think of the Old Testament character named Job. This is most often what we have considered his example for us to be.

Yet, Job was outstanding in so many additional ways. His devotion to God is something we all would do well to imitate. His sense of responsibility for his children signifies a depth of character that too many of us are content to live without. His charity to the less fortunate, his refusal to denounce God when the hard times came, and so much more, speak of extraordinary quality.

In my daily Bible reading notebook I have listed several verses from Job that caught my attention. In each instance I find a quality to emulate. See what you think.

> *"I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread"* (Job 23:12).

> *"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl"* (Job 31:1).

Near the close of the book, God rebukes Job sharply. Job went a little too far in his questioning of God regarding the suffering he was enduring. After the rebuke, rather than being angry, Job spoke:

> *". . . I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:6).

God was right and Job was wrong. Job had enough depth about him to realize this and admit it. We don't see that kind of character often enough.

We can learn a great deal from Job. Let's not think only of patience when we think of Job. Like so many other great people of faith, his life consisted of so much more than the lives of many of us who feel that we are walking by faith. ✝

Jack W. Carter is editor of *Rocky Mountain Christian* and preaches for the church in Castle Rock, Colorado, U.S.A.

Judas

Bill Dillon

Judas' Mistake

Only the dead and the unborn make no mistakes. Some mistakes are minor and can be easily fixed. Others are major and carry consequences which may last for a lifetime or an eternity. The worst mistake any man can make is to reject Christ. Judas Iscariot committed this error and found himself condemned.

Judas' Beginning

Judas started out well. He was a close associate of the Lord, even being the treasurer for the band of apostles. He was chosen by Christ; he was given numerous opportunities; he witnessed some of the most notable and significant events in the history of the Gospel, but Judas allowed the Devil to enter into him, and he went out into the darkness of night to betray the Son of God (John 13:26-30).

Judas' Character

John 12 tells us something of the character of Judas. Judas *"was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it"* (John 12:6). Nothing is said in Scripture about any noble motive Judas may have had. The only excuse for Judas was that he was covetous and greedy, and this was a poor excuse at that. Paul wrote that *"the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil"* (1 Timothy 6:10). The desire for ill-gotten gain preyed upon his mind, and Judas betrayed the best friend mankind ever had.

Judas' Price

Judas sold out the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but this was not the real price of his mistake. He received no benefits from the money and never had another minute's joy in this world or in the world to come. Judas selected suicide as the way to deal with his guilt (Acts 1:17,18). He can be described as "the man who kissed the door of heaven and went to hell."

Men today still betray Christ. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss; modernism accomplishes the same by speaking well of the Lord. When unbelievers say that Jesus was "a good teacher" or "a good man" and go no further in recognizing the deity of Christ, they too have betrayed the Son of God.

When we live unrighteously, we betray Him. When we refuse the counsel of His word, we betray Him. If we just drift carelessly through life, we betray Him.

All the wealth in the world and all the pleasures imaginable would one day be freely and gladly traded for an opportunity to correct the mistake many are now making. It will be too late then.

Sinner, won't you obey the Gospel? (Mark 16:16) ✝

Bill Dillon preaches the Gospel in Mountain Home, Arkansas, U.S.A.

A Man Named Matthew

Leon Cole

A most interesting way to study the Bible is to do a study of its characters. Often the characters that are not studied as frequently as others afford some of the most important lessons. Such is true of the man Jesus saw at the receipt of custom and said to him, *"follow me"* (Matthew 9:9). His name was Matthew.

Matthew is also called Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). He would not have been viewed by very many as a possible disciple of Jesus. He was a "publican" — a collector of Roman taxes. His countrymen thought of him as a traitor. As a class, publicans were guilty of greed and corruption. Since they were employees of Rome, they exacted enough money to pay their masters and an extra amount for themselves.

This man, then, was friendless and an outcast. His only associates were other tax gatherers. He was barred from worshipping at the synagogue. From reading Luke 18:13 one gets the impression that publicans were even afraid to go further into the temple than the entrance.

When we read of that publican beating his breast and crying, *"God be merciful to me, a sinner"* we wonder if that is a picture of Matthew. It must reflect his attitude, knowing he was not accepted by his people, and perhaps wondering if God would accept him.

There have been others who have been called by the Gospel from the depths of sin. The Corinthians are examples (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Folks should never despair simply because they have been great sinners. That is who Jesus came to save.

When Jesus passed by the toll booth, the opportunity for Matthew came. This outcast was offered a better occupation and rewards greater than silver and gold. He could serve a better king than Caesar. Matthew was not seeking Christ; Christ was seeking him. There is a tremendous lesson here for us: if we would follow the Master, we too must be seeking the lost.

Matthew arose and followed Jesus immediately. If he had dismissed this opportunity, another might never have come. In following Jesus, emphasis must always be on the present. Matthew left all; nothing would stand between him and serving Jesus. He was also unashamed of his decision. He prepared a feast for the Lord and invited his associates (other tax gatherers). He was celebrating his new life, bidding farewell to the old, and giving his friends an opportunity to hear the Savior.

All this was done because Jesus *"saw a man named Matthew."* Others saw a despised outcast. It is thrilling to read of the lost being found by a searching, seeking Savior. Truly we are reminded of the wonders of divine grace. Let us go with this grace, urging men to leave the old man of sin to become a new creation in Christ.

Leon Cole preaches for the Pulaski Street congregation in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, U. S. A.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Abandoned by God

Bobby Dockery

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves . . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting . . . (Romans 1:24,28)

One of the most sobering statements in all of the Bible is found in Romans 1:26. Of certain people involved in sinful and degrading life styles, Paul wrote: *"God gave them up . . . "* Because of their addiction to vile practices, God completely washed His hands of them! To further emphasize their spiritual isolation, Paul twice repeated the indictment: *"God gave them up . . . "* (Romans 1:24,28).

What a terrifying condition! To be abandoned by God! Adding to this tragedy was the fact that these people were entirely responsible for their hopeless condition. They brought it upon themselves! They had been abandoned by God only after they had first abandoned Him! Turning their backs on God, these people became *"filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice . . . insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful . . . "* (Romans 1:29-31).

From this catalog of the "sins of the abandoned" three truths about sin and its nature emerge.

1. Sin is real. The abandoned condition of these people was the result of the actual presence of sin in their lives. Theirs was not a case of cultural deprivation, social mal-adjustment, or psychological disturbance. They were guilty of rejecting God's standards and attempting to replace them with standards of their own. Their sin had placed them under the sentence of divine wrath (Romans 1:18).

2. Sin is destructive. One of the great tragedies of sin is what it does

to the sinner. Sin destroys the intellect. The reckless sinners of Romans 1 became "fools" in their abandonment (Romans 1:22). Sin corrupts the emotions. Paul characterized these sinners as *"depraved reprobates"* given to *"vile"* and *"degrading"* passions (Romans 1:26,28). **Sin wrecks the body.** Paul noted that sin had caused some of them to *"dishonor"* their own bodies (Romans 1:24).

3. Sin drives a wedge between us and God. The greatest tragedy of sin is what it does to a person's relationship with God. Sin is an intolerable offense against the holy nature of God. It is an act of rebellion against the authority of God. Those who do not repent and abandon their sins become completely and irrevocably alienated from God! The prophet Isaiah pictured it this way:

Behold the Lord's hand is not so short
That it cannot save;
Neither is His ear so dull
That it cannot hear.
But your iniquities have made a separation
Between you and your God,
And your sins have hid His face from you
So that He does not hear.

(Isaiah 59:1-2)

If you live in sin, you live apart from God. It is essential that you do something before your separation leads to abandonment. How frightening to be among those of whom it is said: *"God gave them up . . . . "*

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U.S.A.

We walk alone unless
we walk with God;
only God can know the inner man.

— BBC

Therefore —

T. Pierce Brown

. . . All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20).

As I was meditating on the Great Commission, I was struck anew by the word "therefore." Without it, the Great Commission would have no power or purpose. Jesus had said, "All **authority** is given unto me — *therefore*, go, teach, baptize, disciple — " Do you get the implications of that? Without the authority of Christ any going we do is useless; any teaching we do is vain; any baptizing we do is but empty ritual; any discipline we perform is wasted.

Just the awareness of this fact alone and acting upon its principles would change the whole course of religious activity, both in the Lord's church and in all denominations. In fact, if men acted upon this principle, all denominations would cease. **None of them** exist by the authority of Jesus, so all doctrines and practices which they perform — even if the outward act is the same as that which is by His authority — would automatically cease.

The awareness of the implications of "**therefore**" would have both positive and negative effects in a fantastic way. That is, it would have negative effects in the sense that none of us would do that in a religious context which was not authorized by Jesus. No discussion would be necessary concerning the use of instrumental music in worship, for example. "All authority is given unto me — Go ye **therefore** and sing" would be easy to understand. But "Go ye **therefore** and play" would automatically be eliminated.

The positive effects would also be wonderful if this statement were fully comprehended. The question might be raised, "Why are you so concerned about going into all the

world with the Gospel?" The answer would immediately be evident, "Because of 'therefore' — My Lord, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, Who died for me, and thus demands and constrains my loving obedience, desires it."

David Lipscomb and others who claim there is no higher motive for baptism than that the Lord commanded it are no doubt right in that. But to conclude from that the false notion that a person can *"obey from the heart that form of doctrine"* (Romans 6:17) without understanding in the heart what the form of doctrine involves does not follow.

To make it simpler: If the One who has all authority says, *"Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins,"* and a person replies, "I do not think that is necessary," it is impossible for him to be baptized by the authority of Jesus, no matter what he may say his motive is.

A man may say, "I am going to take the Lord's Supper by the authority of Jesus, because I want to obey Him." We may admit that there is no higher authority, nor any higher motive. But if he then takes what he calls the Lord's Supper consisting of a cookie and coffee, only on "Easter Sunday" (or even once a quarter, and consisting of whatever he chooses) because "his church" so practices, whatever he may say about it has little value. *"In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9) should not be too hard to apply if we kept "therefore" of Matthew 28:19 firmly in mind. It suggests, "Christ has all authority. Therefore do what you do by **His** authority." ⇧

T. Pierce Brown lives and preaches in Cookeville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

✻ The best way to overcome this world is to be heavenly minded.

✻ We are in pursuit of holiness!

✻ Right thinking has to precede right doing. If you want to live godly, you must first think like God.

— selected

I Must Not Forget to Exhort Them

Glenn Colley

For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them (2 Peter 2:21).

How many times in life have you started something with excitement and fervor, only to find later that the task was harder than you expected? Such is often the case with Christians who are young in the faith. Christianity demands perennial persistence — "Keep on keeping on." That's not easy. However, falling away from Christ's body permanently has devastating results: *"It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them"* (2 Peter 2:21).

Hebrews 3:12-14 reads, *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."*

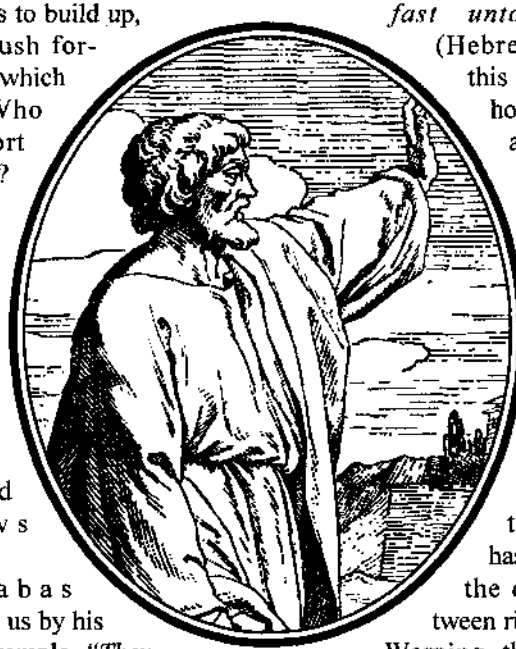
We learn the following important lessons from this text:

1. A Christian can depart from God. This verse clearly disproves the false doctrine called the "impossibility of apostasy." This point flashes a danger sign. Here is what can happen. Preachers, teachers, elders, and parents need to be instilling the fearful terror of departing from God. Romans 8:38 says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, but *I* may shun His love and depart from Him.

People need to be reminded that while departing from God here may sadly seem to them to produce little life change (they still work, live, eat, drink, etc.), the difference in eternity will be unspeakable. We

are never completely without God's blessing here on earth (Matthew 5:44), but no one in hell will benefit one whit from God's goodness.

2. The protection against this apostasy is to "exhort one another daily." Christians strengthen other Christians. Just as ball teams do better with the "home team advantage," so Christians are fed with the exhortation of other Christians. Exhort means to build up, motivate, push forward in that which is right. Who should exhort Christians? **Elders** should (Titus 1:9). **Preachers** should (2 Timothy 4:1-4). **Fellow Christians** should (Hebrews 10:24,25).



Barnabas taught this to us by his marvelous example. *"Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord"* (Acts 11:22-24).

3. We are reaching for the ultimate prize. *"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end"* (Hebrews 3:14). In this verse we have hope, motivation, and warning. Hope, that we will one day begin eternity with Christ in the house not made with hands. Motivation, to do right according to the One who has revealed to us the difference between right and wrong. Warning, that I will miss the promises of Christ if I don't hold steadfastly to the end. 1 Peter 1:9 says, *"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."*

Exhorting our brothers and sis-

ters sounds easy, but often it is not easy. It requires boldness in Christ, a cause bigger than ourselves, and a love for others strong enough to sometimes risk jeopardizing our relationship by speaking with them about their spiritual well-being.

I have come to the conclusion that we sometimes have unwritten laws regarding exhortation. Many feel that there are "sacred grounds" which must be left alone when it comes to how we exhort others. For example, some believe it is good to discuss biblical morals and to encourage people to support these teachings in others — unless it has some connection to a political candidate. Some people believe that introducing spiritual matters to others in general is improper and impolite, "too personal."

Let's all re-examine our hearts and the walls which prevent us from being exhorters in things people need to hear. If I'm failing to speak to another about spiritual concerns, what is my reasoning? Is it really valid, or should I be swallowing my pride and speaking loving exhortation to that individual? Chances are that each of us became Christians because someone, somewhere, did not forget the tremendous importance of being an exhorter. ✞

Glenn Colley is the editor of *The Words of Truth*, and he preaches for the church in Jasper, Alabama, U.S.A.

Land of the Living Dead

Rising to eat —
Going to work —
Coming back home —
Going to sleep —
The alarm rings —
Up again —
To eat —
Back to work —
Coming home —
Back to sleep —
Head turns not —
Neither right nor left —
In monotone —
The inhabitants go.
The living dead —
Seeing nothing —
Doing nothing noble —
No purpose in life —
No goals to set —
Or goals to reach —
Arising to eat —
Going to work —
Coming home —
Going to sleep —
Not worshiping God —
Buried in the sod —
Forgotten by all!

— Sarah Hudson Pierce

Wise Children

P.R. Swamy

"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother" (Proverbs 10:1).

Two opposite ways of life are portrayed in this passage of Scripture. Wisdom is moral excellence. Folly is foolish acting, full of vices.

Who is the wise son? Not necessarily is he a person who is well educated in the secular world. Instead, he who has learned the fear of God and has built his character according to the teachings of God is wise indeed.

The mother-figure is introduced for the sake of parallelism. "Father" in the maxim includes the mother, but "father" and "mother" are separated for the sake of contrasts.

It is impossible to estimate the tremendous influence the children have on their parents, but children seldom believe this. They think that their course of life cannot be of much consequence to anyone so they often become indifferent to the feelings of their parents.

It is universally agreed that no one can understand the depth of love of parents, until he/she becomes a parent himself. Children receive from the parents life, food, shelter, and love throughout. They should realize that, in addition, a great deal of trust is given to them. They are actually entrusted with the happiness of their parents. They have it in their power to brighten Father and Mother's life or to darken it, to make them happy or miserable.

The secret of influence is in the moral and spiritual conduct of the son or daughter. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). A foolish son is not necessarily dull and unintelligent, but one who does not abide by the teachings of God.

When the children are infants, parents often dream of their earthly prosperity or a brilliant career, wealth and other world-wise achievements. As life opens out more fully, the parents come to see that these things are secondary. It is not the dullness or failures and troubles that bring father's grey hair with sorrow to the grave; it is sin — moral and spiritual failure — that is most critical.

It is heart-rending for a mother to part with her infant if he dies an early death, but this grief is calm and tolerable. In contrast, if the child has lived to maturity, fallen into sin, brought shame to the family, and dies in that shame, what a crushing agony! An example of this hurt is the grief David felt for Absalom (2 Samuel 19). If the child is spared to live a life of usefulness and honour, what a great joy! Jacob's continual happiness with his son, Joseph, illustrates this relationship (Genesis 49).

Every parent's prayer should be "Father, help us to bring up our children in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) Their character depends on our character.

They will

1. believe what we teach them.
2. follow the example we set before them.
3. catch the spirit we manifest in their presence.

Parents are their role models.

Children must honour their father and mother, that it may go well with them and that they may live long on the earth. (Eph. 6:1-3)

Parents and children must understand each other's influence and responsibilities. The power is in their hands to make the other happy or miserable

Similarly, God is our father. We can grieve His heart by our sins but God rejoices in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents.

Parents! Let us produce some wise sons and daughters!!! ✝

P.R. Swamy is a Gospel preacher, Tamil radio speaker, and Tamil magazine editor in Bangalore, India.

My Child

Don't walk and talk,
Think and look
Like the world does;
Be distinct,
Be separate,
Dare to be different,
Examine yourself
According to your gifts.
The Lord will bless;
I know He loves you.
He only loaned you to me
For a little while;
He knew I would love you
More than life;
My heart and soul grew
Because of you.
As a child you obeyed,
You honored my rules;
The Lord gave us His rules,
His instructions,
His directions,
They are written in His book;
His book is a letter to you
As an adult.
If you fail to honor and obey Him
I will have failed.

— Alemia Spradley

Discerning Both Good and Evil

(Spiritual Calisthenics Suggested In Reading Hebrews 5:12-14)

CATALOGUE OF SINS

Works of the Flesh
Gal. 5:19-21

- ★ Adultery
- ★ Fornication
- ★ Uncleanness
- ★ Lasciviousness
- ★ Idolatry
- ★ Witchcraft
- ★ Hatred
- ★ Variance
- ★ Emulations
- ★ Wrath
- ★ Strife
- ★ Seditions
- ★ Heresies
- ★ Envyings
- ★ Murders
- ★ Drunkenness
- ★ Revelings
- ★ Such Like

PLACE THESE!

To Which Group
Do These Belong?

Where?

- **— Profanity —**
- **— Gossiping —**
- **— Smutty Stories —**
- **— Gambling —**
- **— Drinking —**
- **— Mixed Bathing —**
- **— Immodest Dress —**
- **— Using Tobacco —**

GOOD FRUIT

Fruit of the Spirit
Gal. 5:22-23

- ★ Love
- ★ Joy
- ★ Peace
- ★ Longsuffering
- ★ Gentleness
- ★ Goodness
- ★ Faith
- ★ Meekness
- ★ Temperance

Dillard Thurman

Your Most Important Quality: Attitude

Ken Tyler

Introduction: Attitude is defined as "one's disposition." Other words as "mental state," "emotion," "mood," and "opinion" are also used to define attitude. Our attitude is our most important quality. The attitude we have determines what kind of people we are.

Every person should desire to have a good attitude. A good attitude is essential for a proper relationship at home, work, school, and yes, in the church. Our attitude affects every aspect of our lives. In this lesson I want to make four suggestions that I hope will help all of us develop better attitudes.

I. Be optimistic.

A. Most people who have bad attitudes are very negative people.

1. There is always something wrong, never anything right!
2. Individuals who fit into this category are usually very unhappy and hard to get along with.

B. A better attitude begins with being an optimistic, positive person.
   1. Don't allow yourself to become so negative that you cannot function as a child of God.
   2. Paul said, *"I can . . ."* even though things were not going very well with him (Philippians 4:13).

II. Learn to cope with failure.

A. Failure is one of the most difficult aspects of life.
   1. We all fail, both spiritually and in our day-to-day activities of life.
   2. How we handle failure will determine what kind of life we have.
      a. David and Peter both failed miserably, but neither allowed it to destroy them.
      b. Judas, on the other hand, went out and hanged himself.
   3. Remember, you never fail until you quit trying (Matthew 10:22).

III. Don't let opposition get you down.

A. There will always be words, actions, and situations that we have to deal with in life. See 2 Timothy 3:12.

B. Jesus gives us the power to handle the opposition we encounter (2 Timothy 1:12).
   1. Hebrews 13:5,6 — *". . . The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."*
   2. 2 Chronicles 16:9 — *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him . . ."*

IV. Give your life to others.

A. It is very difficult to have a bad attitude if you keep busy helping others.
   1. *". . . It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).
   2. Individuals who fill their lives doing for others are the happiest people on earth.

B. Dorcas *". . . was full of good works and almsdeeds . . ."* (Acts 9:36).

C. Jesus *". . . went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38).

Conclusion: Obviously, your attitude determines the quality of your life. What kind of attitude do you have today? ✝

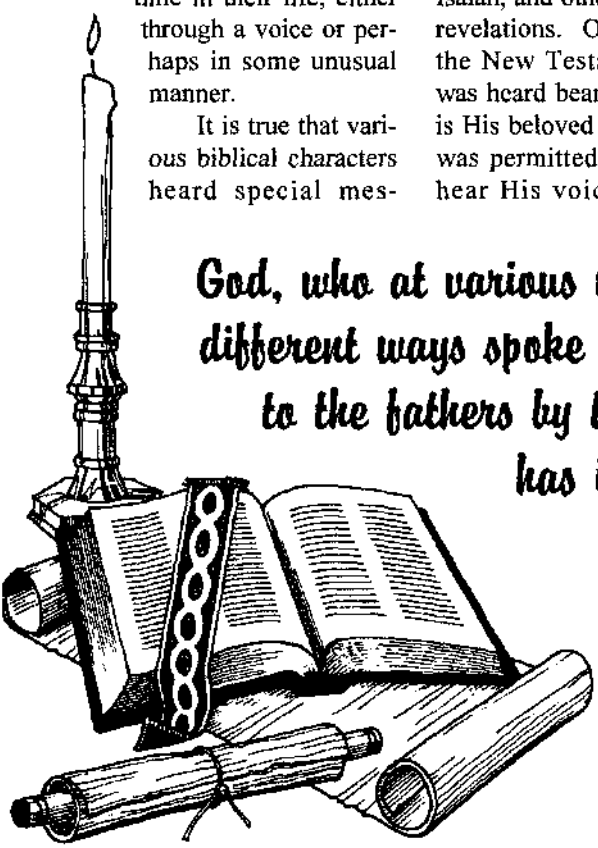
Ken Tyler preaches for the Lord's church in Arab, Alabama, U.S.A.

How Does God Speak to Us Today?

John Thiesen

Will God speak to us in an audible voice today? Many are expecting to hear God speak to them a special message at some time in their life, either through a voice or perhaps in some unusual manner.

It is true that various biblical characters heard special messages from Heaven, either through an angel or the very voice of God Himself. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and others all received direct revelations. On three occasions in the New Testament, God's voice was heard bearing record that Jesus is His beloved Son. Saul of Tarsus was permitted to see Jesus and to hear His voice after Christ had



God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.

(Hebrews 1:1,2)

already gone back to heaven.

Because the Bible has these examples, many have concluded that voices from heaven should be the natural expectation of communing with God today.

Christ The Final Spokesman

What they do not know is that God has changed His way of speaking to us in our age of time. Before Christ, God spoke to His people in many ways. *"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"* (Hebrews 1:1,2). God spoke to the fathers through the prophets who received the communications in various ways: through visions, dreams, angels, and sometimes by a voice. But now in our time, God no longer speaks through the prophets. He speaks to us only through His Son.

God's Revelation Now Complete

Jesus is God's final spokesman to mankind in this last age. He brought the fullness of God's revelation to us. There are no more messages to await. This great, final Word from God has been deposited into the permanent, universally accessible form of the Holy Scriptures of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the light of this truth, why should God bypass His chosen way of speaking to us through His Son, and favor one particular person with a special voice in order to show him Christ? The Bible says that God is not a respecter of persons. If He were to save one person in this way, by His very impartial nature He would be obliged to extend the same favor to all the rest of us. Even during the days when God was speaking directly to men, He did not speak to all, but to chosen prophet mediators who relayed the messages to the people.

Please, all who read these words — God is trying to speak to you today. If you will read and study His Word, the Bible, you can learn His message to you and to the rest of mankind.

John Thiesen is a former missionary to Malawi and works now with the Pleasant Valley church in Mobile, Alabama, U.S.A.

And I will delight myself in
Your commandments,
Which I love.
My hands also I will lift up
to Your commandments,
Which I love,
And I will meditate on
Your statutes.
Psalm 119:47,48

Why Not "Reverend?"

Dennis R. Smith

He sent forth redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; *holy and reverend is his name* (Psalm 111:9).

Many wonder why preachers of the church of Christ do not use the word "Reverend" in front of their name, or why they do not like to be addressed as such when spoken to. The answer to this, like all related subjects, is found in the Bible.

First, there is a complete absence in the Bible of this word being applied to any person on earth. The words "preacher," "evangelist," "minister," or "servant" are used often to identify a "proclaimer" of the Word, but the use of the word "reverend" is found only in connection with God Himself. In Psalm 111:9 we read, *"He sent forth redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; holy and reverend is his name."* Since the use of this word is limited to only once in the Bible, and then it is used in application to God Himself, the church of Christ believes that it should be reserved for **the Most High only**. This may seem a small thing to some, but its use is another indication that various religious practices of today stem from a man-made origin instead of from the Bible.

Man's religious use of this word also shows a definite separation between certain "proclaimers" of the Word. That is, the word "reverend" distinguishes the "clergy" from the "laymen." Here, again, is a product of the mind of man, and not of God. No distinction is made in the New Testament between a man who is formally "ordained" and one who simply loves the truth, and through the call of the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) begins to preach the good news of Christ. In other words, one Christian, whether he is a preacher or just a regular member, is not to be exalted above the other. Therefore, in keeping with a "thus saith the Lord," the church of Christ refrains from the use of this word other than to identify God Himself.

Dennis R. Smith preaches for the Kansas Expressway congregation in Springfield, Missouri, U.S.A.

Jesus is called "the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15).

Was Christ Created?

Wayne Jackson

No, this passage does not teach that Christ was a created being — in spite of the fact that the "Jehovah's Witnesses" so argue. The Greek word for "firstborn" is *prototokos*, and it can simply denote that which is "first or chief" in rank. In the Old Testament, Ephraim (a synonym for the kingdom of Israel) was said to be Jehovah's "firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:9), yet technically Ephraim, Joseph's son — from whom the appellation was derived — was younger than his brother Manasseh (Genesis 48:14). "Firstborn" was thus used of Ephraim because he was to be the greater of the two (Genesis 48:19).

In a prophecy that is obviously Messianic, and one that may form the background of Colossians 1:15, Jehovah announced: *"I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth"* (Psalm 89:27). The future tense form of the verb excludes the idea of a literal origin. Adam Clarke noted that the Jews even referred to God, the Father, as "the firstborn of all the world" to denote His role as Creator. Paul may employ the term in a similar way in Colossians 1:15. The Second Person of the Godhead (i.e., Christ) is eternal (Micah 5:2, John 1:1). ✞

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

"In God's Family, comprising all the obedient righteous of all time, there is the firstborn: Jesus Christ. In prospect, Abraham could be called a child of God, or David could be called a child of God, because Jesus' coming as God's Firstborn would open the way of sonship to those before Him as well as to those who would come after Him. (Hebrews 9:15)

"How can we know this understanding is correct? By the simple answer to the question: *Which man, born before Christ chronologically, could approach God on his own merits?* Where was the man without sin? If Christ had not become the Son of God, *there could have been no sonship for any human."* — from **Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice**, BBC

Questions People Are Asking

Garell L. Forehand

Question: Isn't it true that the Bible says we are to never judge anyone?

Answer: Read Matthew 7:1-5 carefully. Essentially He says, "Don't work on anybody else's problems until you've first worked on your own. Then do so." Later in the same chapter, He said, *"Beware of false prophets . . . By their fruits you will know them"* (verses 15,16). That is judgment or determination. In John 7:24 Jesus said, *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*

Question: Doesn't Jesus want us to accept everyone and every lifestyle with love and tolerance?

Answer: Ephesians 5:10-13 says, "(Find) *out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret."* 2 Timothy 4:2 says, *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."*

Question: We can't be certain what is absolutely true, can we? We shouldn't bind our views on others. We **know** that we can't **know** anything! We'll have to wait till the last day to find out how the Lord will judge.

Answer: *"You shall know the truth"* (John 8:32). *"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:20,21). *"These things command and teach"* (1 Timothy 4:11). *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"* (Romans 1:18). "(Those) *who,* ***knowing*** *the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them"* (verse 32).

Conclusion: If we want to teach error, certainly we may do so. But let's not misapply the Lord's words to attempt to prove things that are blatantly false!

Garell L. Forehand is the preacher for the Granbury Street church in Cleburne, Texas, U.S.A.

Australia

Stephen Randall

Australia is a Constitutional Democracy (under the British Queen as head of state). Socially it is moving from being a British Colony prior to 1901 to being an independent Republic in the future. The landmass of Australia is over 7.5 million square kilometers, making it the sixth largest country in the world by area. It has a density of only 2 people per square mile, due to the fact that most of its landmass is desert and 90% of the population live on the coastal fringe.

Culturally, Australia strongly reflects its British origins and, being English speaking, it is being greatly influenced by the U.S.A. in recent years. It is one of the most highly urbanized nations on the planet and has a high standard of living with a well-educated population.

The currency is the Australian Dollar which floats about $.70 U.S. Life expectancy is 77 years. Infant mortality is 7/1000. Religions are Roman Catholic and Mainline Protestantism which are not zealously held to. The national day is currently Australia Day, January 26.

The Church in Australia

According to Churches of Christ Around the World, edited by Mac Lynn, Ph.D., "Thomas Magarey is credited with bringing the Restoration Movement to Australia from England in 1845. The first congregation

formed was in Adelaide (1848).

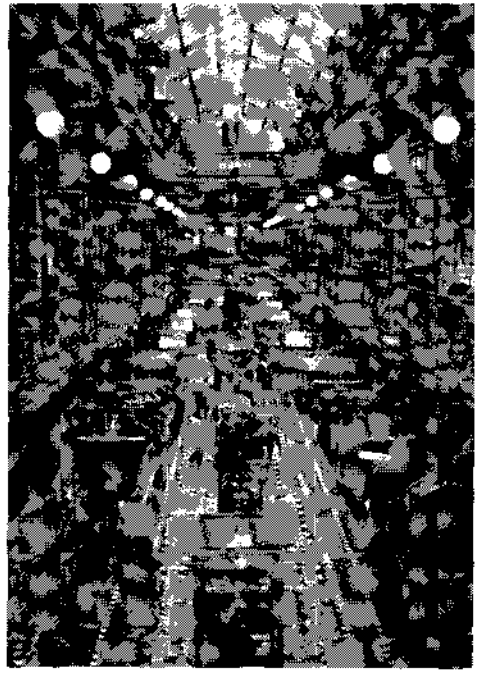
"The introduction of instrumental music and institutionalism brought division in the early 20th century. Before the division, the brotherhood may have reached as many as 8,000 members in 130 churches with 26 evangelists. The rupture left only 100 Christians dedicated to acappela singing and opposed to the missionary society, mainly around Sydney. Leaders for the cause included John Allen Hudson, J.W. Shepherd, Colin Smith, and Charles Tinius.

"Americans again began to flow into Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. These included G. Fletcher Cauthen, Ron Durham, Duward Lee, Sam Mormino, Marvin Phillips, Coy and David Roper, William Stanley, Tom Tarbet, Rodney Wald, and Rudy Wyatt. Between 1968 and 1975, more than 40 American missionaries served in Australia."

(It is interesting to note that the first fifty years of the church's existence in Australia saw 8,000 conversions. After the devastating division, the following 100 years of work have netted less than 2,000 souls. Ed.)

The churches of Christ in Australia now meet in eighty congregations. The number of baptized members is around 1,800. Nearly 70% of these are in the three eastern states.

Brethren in Australia are using media in many different ways. A couple of examples are as follows: Ron Bainbridge of the Great Southern church in Albany, WA has a religious issues column which is syndicated in six rural newspapers. Ian McPherson of the Eastern Shore church of Christ has a weekly interview on doctrinal matters on an FM



The Strand Shopping Arcade in Sydney, New South Wales.

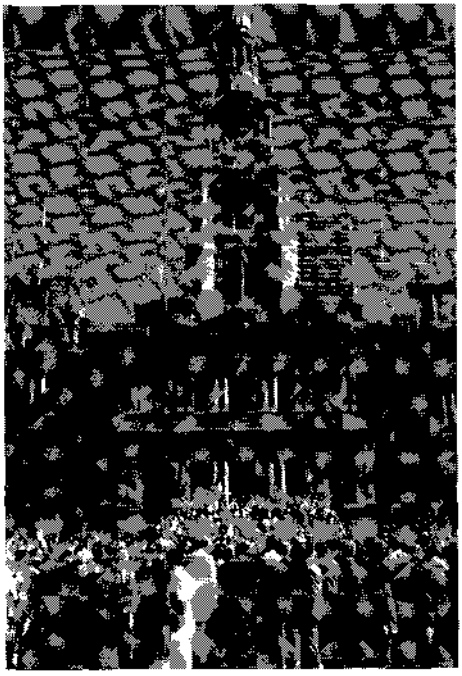
radio station in Hobart.

There are several projects operated by brethren in Australia. The Macquarie School of Biblical Studies is a training course of three years. It is for people wanting to build up their gifts for service to the churches. The program is conducted under the oversight of the Macquarie church of Christ at Ryde in Sydney.

Redlands College is a school run by members of the churches of Christ in Brisbane. It commenced classes eight years ago and has continued to grow until it now has 820 students, grades 1-12. It has a well equipped campus in a fast developing part of Brisbane. There is a staff of 95 and the principal is Alan Todd.

There is a tradition in most capital cities for the churches of Christ to have an Anzac Day Picnic. Anzac Day is an annual war commemoration public holiday. One church reserves a space in a public park and invites members from churches in the city to come. At the picnic there are organized games, but most of the time is spent talking. After lunch there is news sharing time and a period of singing before people go home.

In the last twelve months three regular teaching magazines have ceased publication. *Truth in Love* had been published nearly every week for twenty years by the City Beach church in Perth. There are several teaching bulletins being circulated from individual churches and there is a newsletter called Happenings which seeks to keep the churches informed of the good things going on around the nation.



Anzac Day at the Town Hall in Sydney, New South Wales.

Stephen Randall preaches for the Canberra Church of Christ in Canberra, Australia.

Evangelism and the Belmore Road Experience

Marvin Ancelm

I would like to share some things about evangelism that I have found to be productive in my efforts with the Belmore Road church in Melbourne. I pray that if you can see something in this very brief article which might help you, that you will prayerfully consider it and diligently go to work on it in your daily life. So, let's turn then to the subject at hand.

Attitude all important

Successful evangelism begins with an attitude. This attitude, found in all successful evangelists, is the attitude of absolute love and devotion to God. No attempt at evangelism can ever be truly successful until the evangelist approaches the idea of evangelism with a spirit that says "Evangelism is the great opportunity to express my love and admiration for God."

To the successful evangelist, evangelism is both a wonderment in living and an awed spirit lifting itself up before God. These two forces come together to create a will which cries out to serve every possible minute because it is such a joy. Like the old man said, "You just can't sell soap, if you are snarling all of the time at life." The life of the successful evangelist shows his love for the Lord.

Listen and love

The second perspective necessary to understand successful evangelism is that of tooling. The first great tool we need to put in our tool chest is that of the art of listening to people. People are willing to respond and listen to you, if you first listen to them. This listening tool is one that has to be tuned to make no pre-judgements.

All of us want to feel that we are important; that we count as people. As our relationship grows with the person with whom we are study-

ing, there will come a time when we can say the hard things, but we do not go in to evangelism to do that and nothing else!

We go into every evangelistic situation with a mind that says "My Lord loves me, and he wants you to share in this love." By letting the subject determine whether or not the person can trust you enough to let you tell them about Jesus, you are proving your love for Jesus by simply listening.

Remember their context

The third perspective that I have found of great value as I approach the study is that of contextuality. When I read of Jesus dealing with people in the New Testament, I see him working within the context of a people who are very well versed in the Scripture, so that he is able to speak topically. But first, before Jesus spoke to these people, there was a context to scripture, and the people were intimately aware of it.

When I study with someone today, the chances are that their Bible knowledge will be actually very limited, so I study the gospel of Mark with them so they can get to know the real Jesus and the awesomeness of his power. I am going into this study with the idea of carrying them to the real Jesus. Now many of these people who agree to study think they know a great deal already, but by reading the text through, a totally new perspective is generated, and the walls of prejudice are breached.

The successful evangelist is the one who presents a full, honest, loving heart portrait of Jesus. As the evangelist goes to the study, he carries a game plan along that was authored by Jesus.

The message has power

The fourth perspective we must carry into any study is the power and supremacy of the word God has given us to share. If there is a greater way to do it than sharing the word, why didn't God let us in on it. I must let God, then, do the talking; the Bible is God talking to all kinds of people and all mindsets. With such a power on my side, what have I to fear, what have I to dread? He has given me the book of answers and therefore I carry this conviction with me to the study.

All that we have discussed so far is the evangelistic attitude that must be carried to the study. By carrying these points with you, you are in a true position of strength at the outset.

Marvin Anselm did missionary work in Italy before his present work of three and a half years with Belmore Road church in Melbourne Australia.

Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search – 8 (from page 78)

1. In the temple.
2. By bringing the woman taken in adultery.
3. He stooped and wrote on the ground; He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." Then He wrote on the ground again.
4. They were convicted by their own consciences.
5. The light of the world; followers of Me shall not walk in darkness.
6. God the Father, and Jesus.
7. Known His Father also.
8. You cannot come.
9. Because He was from above and they were of this world; carnal unbelievers cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.
10. Because of not believing that He was the One sent from God.
11. Those things which He had heard from His Father.
12. Lift up the Son of Man; . . .I am He; My Father taught Me, I speak these things.
13. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
14. Is a slave of sin.
15. The descendants of Abraham.
16. Father Abraham rejoiced.
17. Picked up stones to kill Him, because they recognized that He was claiming to be Deity (the "I AM" of Exodus 3) — blasphemy, they thought.

Who Am I?

(from page 47)

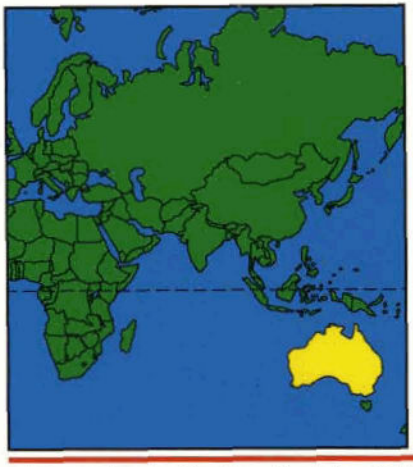
David

The Book of 2 Corinthians (page 29)

We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed. So we do not lose heart. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

(2 Corinthians 4:8,9;16-18)

For further information, please contact:



Government: Constitutional Democracy
Sovereign: Queen Elizabeth II
Governor General: William Hayden
Prime Minister: Paul Keating

Information by: Stephen Randall, minister of church of Christ in Canberra, ACT.

Secular Facts:

Location: South of the Equator, in the Eastern Hemisphere.

Land Mass: 2,966,150 square miles, including Tasmania; sixth largest country in the world.

Population: 17,800,000.

Major Cities: Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, **Canberra**.

Ethnic Groups:
90 % British until the last quarter-century. recent influx of Europeans and Southeast Asians, 1% aborigines.

Language:
English.

Literacy:
100 %.

Religion:
26 % Anglican, 26 % Roman Catholic, 23 % Protestant.

Economy:
Most of the people live in the cities. Products include wool, meat, dairy items. Gold, wheat, meat, wool are exported. Tasmania is a leading supplier of licit opiate products.

Monetary Unit:
Australian dollar, equals U.S. $.70.

The Church:

Congregations: There are approximately 80 congregations with a total membership of 1800, 70 % of these in the three eastern states where the bulk of the population lives.

State:	Churches:	preachers:	Bldgs.:
Queensland	22	6 Aus.	10
N. South Wales	21	11 Aus; 3 US	10
Victoria	11	2 Aus; 1 US	10
Tasmania	7	3 Aus; 1 US	3
S. Australia	6	2 Aus.	2
W. Australia	9	0	4
Territories	2	1 Aus.	1

History: Thomas Magarey brought the truth to Australia from England in 1845. In 50 years the church grew to 8000 Christians in 130 churches. However, the apostasy of the early 20th Century left only 100 faithful.

Modern History: The Macquarie School of Biblical Studies in Sydney, under the leadership of Ted Paull, offers a three-year training course. **Redlands College** in Brisbane, grades 1-12, has 820 students. Ron Bainbridge, in Albany, WA has a syndicated religious issues column in local newspapers. Ian McPherson has a weekly interview on doctrinal matters on FM radio in Hobart. A newsletter called *Happenings* keeps churches informed about good things going on around the nation.

Front Cover: **The Opera House,** a soaring edifice in white marble, located in Sydney, Australia.