VOLUME ELEVEN

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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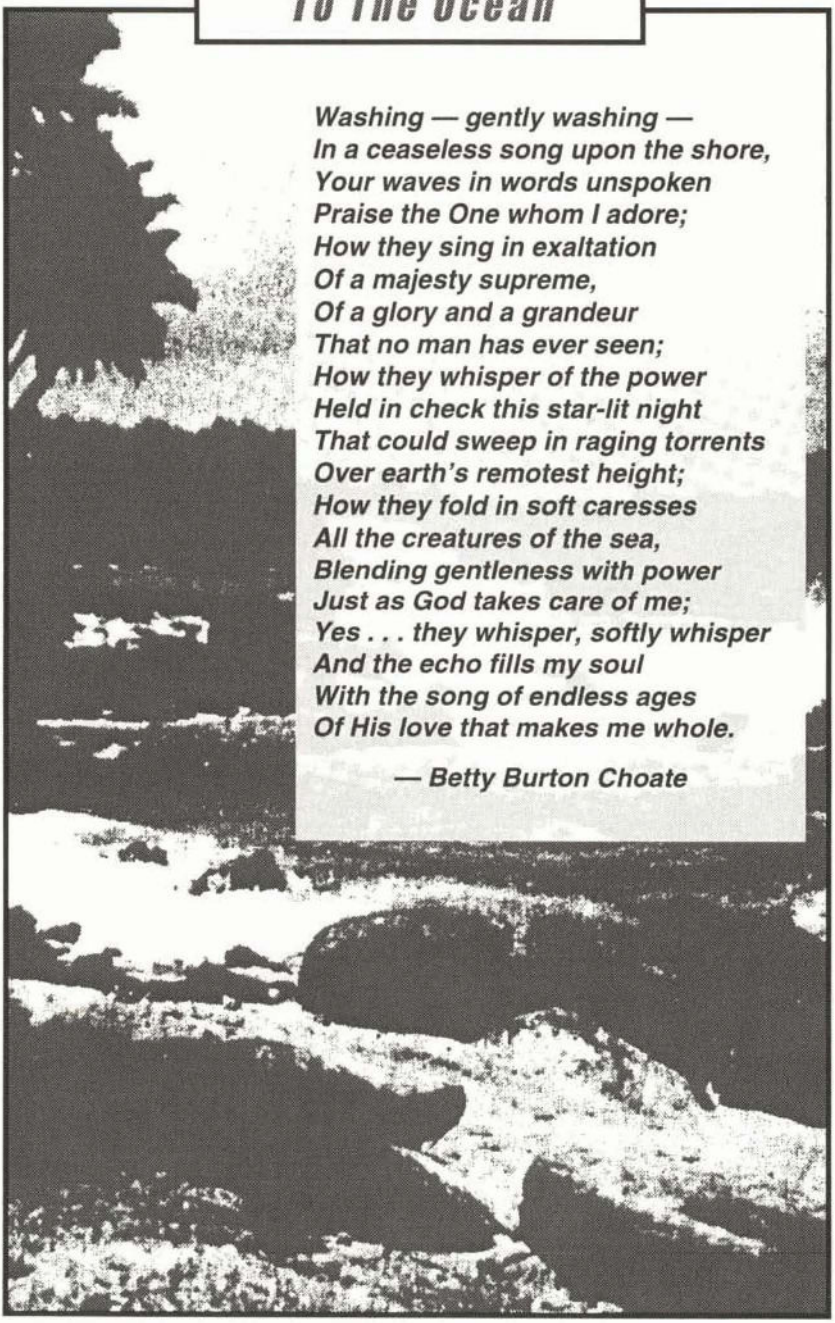

Washing — gently washing —
In a ceaseless song upon the shore,
Your waves in words unspoken
Praise the One whom I adore;
How they sing in exaltation
Of a majesty supreme,
Of a glory and a grandeur
That no man has ever seen;
How they whisper of the power
Held in check this star-lit night
That could sweep in raging torrents
Over earth's remotest height;
How they fold in soft caresses
All the creatures of the sea,
Blending gentleness with power
Just as God takes care of me;
Yes . . . they whisper, softly whisper
And the echo fills my soul
With the song of endless ages
Of His love that makes me whole.

— Betty Burton Choate

The Voice of Truth International

A Word . . .

We learn whether we walk by faith or by sight when we meet the hard times. *Anyone* can glory in the strength of his faith as long as it is not challenged. But will I still trust my all in God's hands when I am hurting, when I can't see the way, when there is no understanding of what I am called on to endure?

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

EVANGELISM IS THE ANSWER!

J. C. CHOATE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The idea of evangelism involves preaching the gospel, converting souls from sin, and spreading salvation. This is how Christ lived, what He taught, and what His followers practiced. The full message of the gospel was preached for the first time in approximately A.D. 33, and within less than 30 years it had been taken to all the world. What a story!

Jesus was ever on the move during His personal ministry. He went to the villages and to the cities. He spoke to the multitudes and to individuals. He used physical acts to teach spiritual lessons. No man ever spoke with greater authority or showed the power of God more clearly in His mighty works. Truly, He was the Son of God.

Calling twelve men, known as apostles, Jesus taught them and trained them to carry on His work after His death, burial, and resurrection. Some of His final words were, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"* (Matthew 28:19,20). Just before returning to the Father, He said to the apostles, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the*

Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Turning to Acts 2, we read of Jews coming from all over the world to celebrate Pentecost, a Jewish feast day. This was not by accident. The Lord planned it this way. With the apostles receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all the truth, and with the gospel being preached for the first time in fact, from this very first day the good news began to be taken to all of the world. Some 3,000 people who heard the message, believed it, repented of their sins, were gladly baptized, and the Lord added those that should be saved to His church.

But this was just the beginning. The gospel was preached again and again in Jerusalem and throughout Judaea, with similar results. Then Philip taught in Samaria and many were baptized, both men and women (Acts 1:8).

In Acts 8 we read that Philip preached Christ to a man from Ethiopia. This resulted in his conversion and, no doubt, on returning to his home he was responsible for planting the cause of Christ there. In both Acts 8 and 9 we read of Saul, a man who severely persecuted the Lord's people, but with his conversion he became a great spokesman for Jesus, making three missionary journeys in which many souls were converted and numerous congregations of the Lord's church were established in both Asia and Europe. In Acts 10 the record tells us of Cornelius and his household — Gentiles — who became Christians after hearing the gospel. Now the message of salvation was truly being taken to all mankind!

Although there was persecution of Christians from the beginning, with Peter and John being warned by the High Priest and the Council of the Jews not to continue to

preach Christ, this did not stop the disciples. Steven was martyred and James was slain by Herod, but these acts, and the many others, did not slow the spread of Christianity. Rather, they served as fuel on the fire, causing it to burn even more brightly. The persecuted *"were scattered abroad"* but they *"went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8).

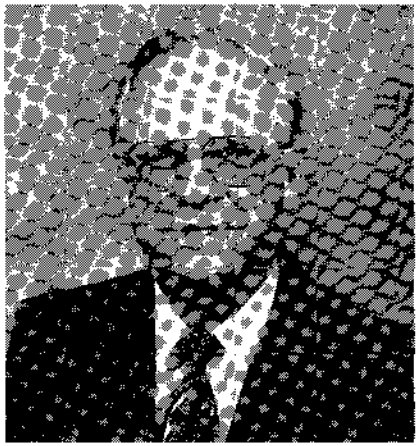
As a result of these things, within less than 30 years the gospel was taken into all the world (Colossians 1:23). There were fewer people back then, but there were many obstacles. They had the gospel but *they did not have the written Word.* They did not have the methods of transportation and communication we take for granted in our age. Yet, they did the work God gave them to do, and *the world was forever changed.*

Today we have the same great commission. What does that commission mean to you and me? Do we take it personally? Do we intend to obey it?

So far, most individual Christians and most congregations have done very little about our Lord's commission. As a result, we are faced with many problems, both outside and inside the church. How can we expect to please God when we fail to do what He has asked us to do?

Will we never learn? Look at the world today with all of its evil, ungodliness, materialism, and outright unbelief. How can these things benefit anyone? As the world grows worse through the influence of sin, will Christians not also suffer grave consequences? Even the problems in our personal lives and in the church itself are the result of our failure to give ourselves to the Lord and to do the work He has asked us to do.

How can we turn this tragedy around? By simply repenting and becoming serious about world evangelism. *Evangelism* is the answer. *Today! Right now!* ⇧



NEEDED: A COVENANT WITH OUR EYES (JOB 31:1)

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

In the course of his great endurance test, the remarkable Job made this statement of great significance: *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"* (Job 31:1). Just what is it that Job is saying here? What does he mean when he says that he had made a "covenant" with his eyes? He is saying that he had made an agreement, a commitment, a vow, a pledge to himself.

In the second part of the verse Job talks about "looking" upon a young woman. Here he has reference to more than just casually looking at or seeing a young woman. The "looking" that he is talking about is the idea of looking intently, looking with impure thoughts, looking with lust. Thus, Job is saying, "I have made an agreement with my eyes, that they are not going to be used to cause me to unduly desire a woman in a way that is wrong in the eyes of God. I have made a commitment that I am not going to let myself look lustfully upon a woman. I have pledged to myself that I am not going to allow my eyes to cause me to sin."

This covenant is truly something that all mankind, especially Christians, should make a part of their lives. The wisdom of Job is exhibited by these great words. He had somehow come to realize the importance of what Jesus would say several centuries later in Matthew 5:27-30. In that passage the Lord told the multitude, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever* ***looks*** *at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (verses 27,28). This is exactly the kind of "looking" against which Job had

made a covenant with his eyes. Certainly he was wise in doing so, for Jesus proceeded to point out in the next verse, *"And if your right eye causes you to sin,* ***pluck it out and cast it from you;*** *for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell"* (verse 29). I'm confident that Jesus worded this verse this way for the sake of emphasis, yet I have no doubt whatsoever that He also intended for us to realize that it truly would be to our eternal advantage to literally have our eye removed from our body, if that were the only way that we could avoid sinning.

David had an "eye problem" occasionally (remember Bathsheba), but in a more thoughtful moment he wrote, *"I will set nothing wicked before my eyes"* (Psalm 101:3). There is indeed some truth in the saying that "what I don't see won't hurt me." Certainly that saying is not accurate in every circumstance, but it undoubtedly is true when it comes to avoiding temptation and sin by not allowing our eyes to even look upon the situation.

In 2 Peter 2:14 Peter spoke of some people *"having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin . . . ."* Friends, every one of us, both male and female, is susceptible to being like those folks. It can and does happen. But, it doesn't have to happen. We can, with God's help, keep it from happening. Remember the assurance given to us all in 1 Corinthians 10:13 — *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."* There it is — we can conquer even the temptations of sensuality. We must do so if we are to be pleasing to the Lord and if we are serious about wanting to go to heaven.

Every married person needs to make the same covenant that Job made. It is imperative that each one truly commit himself/herself to never allow his/her eyes to look upon any other person in such a way as to place a strain on the marriage relationship or to place his/her own soul in danger. Let me especially plead with those who are making marriage plans to do their very best to understand the seriousness of entering into such a relationship, and to make a covenant with their eyes that they will always "have eyes" only for that one special person whom they plan to marry.

A "roving eye" can be a part of anyone's body, but it can be a part of us only if we allow it. Job had a choice — he could be in control, or he could allow himself to be controlled. You and I have the same choice. What will we choose? Let us all make a covenant with our eyes. ✝

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IS IT "INTERNATIONAL"?

IT WAS GOD'S PLAN THAT HIS CHURCH SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD, AND THAT THE GOSPEL CONTINUE TO BE PREACHED TO ALL MEN FOR ALL TIME.

WITH THE MASS MEDIA TOOLS AVAILABLE TO CHRISTIANS TODAY, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A GREAT PERCENTAGE OF THE REPETITIVE TEACHING TO BE DONE THROUGH RADIO OR TELEVISION OR THE PRINTED PAGE.

IT IS OUR AIM TO MAKE THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL THE MOST WIDELY CIRCULATED MAGAZINE IN THE BROTHERHOOD AND THE MOST WIDELY USED PERIODICAL IN ITS EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH. CURRENTLY, EDITIONS ARE PUBLISHED FOR NUMEROUS COUNTRIES, AND COPIES ARE MAILED TO MANY MORE. PLEASE HELP US TO EXPAND THIS OUTREACH.

JCC

Shared Grief

Betty Burton Choate

You smile
and talk,
And go about your day
in seeming normalness.
I might not know your hurt
inside
— I might not guess —
Except that I was there that day
And saw your haunted eyes
And heard your pain
And felt the panic
trembling in your body
As I held you close
and closer still,
Longing to infuse in you
some strength and hope
From my own depleted store.

Oh my love,
You smile
and talk
and go about your day
in seeming normalness.
But underneath I see the shadow
and the pain behind your eyes;
I see the molding of the hurt,
and sometimes
I feel the waves of panic
Cresting to the edge of uncontrol
When hurt and fear
Sweep through your heart anew
And would engulf your soul . . . .

Oh my love,
Find rest in God's arms
and in mine . . . .

The Master Teacher

Tom Kelton

Jesus' chief business was teaching. Of all the ways that the Son of God could have chosen to unleash the Gospel message, He elected to be a teacher. It is true that He was an evangelist. And Christ was

known as a healer and a worker of miracles. Certainly He was a remarkable preacher. But a look at the biblical evidence reveals that the most far-reaching impact of Jesus' life and work came through His teaching.

The Scriptural account of Jesus' life and ministry records numerous "teaching moments" — publicly in the synagogue, in the temple, and in the open air. In fact, Jesus is called "Teacher" more than any other title — forty-two times in the Gospel accounts. Another forty-seven times He is spoken of as "teaching." Christ apparently regarded Himself as a teacher. He never objected to being called by that name, though there were other designations that He forbade both His followers and detractors to use. Everywhere He went, Jesus responded to the cry "Master!"

Even those who disagreed with Him recognized Christ's identity as a master teacher and rabbi. Those Pharisees and Sadducees who opposed Jesus still called Him "the teacher."

Perhaps the most powerful evidence for Jesus as teacher is the disciples that accompanied Him. The disciples — literally "learners" — were a group of interested persons who saw in Jesus not only a speaker of memorable ability, but also a model of righteous living. As a teacher, Jesus Christ opened up to these people not only His words, but His entire life. The success or failure of the teacher was measured by what His pupils went on to accomplish. Certainly the result from Christ's teaching of the disciples makes Him the greatest teacher of all time.

Succeeding generations, both of believers and non-believers, have concurred. Historian Fredrick Mayer asserts that "the impact of Jesus upon educational history . . . is enormous. His stamp can never be erased." **Encyclopedia Judaica** agrees: "Even many persons who are not Christians believe that He was a great and wise teacher. He has probably influenced humanity more than anyone else who ever lived."

For the challenge of Christian education today, there is no better model than Christ. ✞

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

> "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2).

Our God – A Consuming Fire

Rex Banks

Having reminded us that *"God . . . spoke long ago to the* (Hebrew) *fathers in the prophets"* (Hebrews 1:1), the writer of the Hebrews epistle then adds that *". . . in these last days* (i. e., the Christian dispensation) (God) *has spoken to us in His Son"* (Hebrews 1:2). Commentators upon the text often draw our attention to the expression "en huioi" ("in His Son") and point out that there is no article or pronoun here with the preposition "en," ". . . giving the absolute sense of 'Son'" (A.T. Robertson). Evidently emphasis is upon the fact that ". . . the new revelation is given through one who is a son as distinguished from a prophet . . . . The revelation was *son*-revelation" (M.R. Vincent). "God spake to us in one who has this character *that He is a Son"* (Rienecker and Rogers).

Now, as the Hebrews writer continues, he details seven facts about the Son which emphasize His greatness, and thereby stresses the importance of the divine revelation given through Him. First, God *"appointed"* His Son *"heir of all things,"* meaning that Jesus is possessor of all that the Father possesses (Acts 2:36; John 17:10; 16:15). Next, the Son is the One *"through whom also He made the world"* (Galatians 1:15-17; John 1:3,10; 1 Corinthians 8:6), not a "passive tool" but a "cooperating agent"

(Wuest). Then Christ is *"the radiance of His* (God's) *glory,"* perfectly manifesting the brilliant radiancy of the God who cannot be seen (John 1:18). He is also *"the exact representation of His* (God's) *nature,"* so that He may claim with authority: *"He who has seen Me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9). It is Christ who *"upholds all things by the word of His power."* He it was who *". . . made purification of sins"* at awful cost to Himself, and He it was who then *" . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"* exalted, supreme, possessing all authority (Ephesians 4:10; Philippians 2:9; Psalm 110; Luke 22:69; Matthew 28:18; John 17:2). This then, according to the Hebrews writer, is the nature and status of the One through whom God has spoken in the pages of the New Testament.

Now, given the superiority of the Son to *"the prophets,"* what lesson do we learn about Jehovah's revelation through the Christ? Simply this: *" . . . if the word spoken through angels* (at Sinai; Galatians 3:19; Acts 7:53) *proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation* (as that proclaimed by the Son in the Gospel)*?"* (Hebrews 2:2,3). Surely " . . . to treat it lightly therefore must expose one to sanctions even more awful than those which safeguarded the law" (F.F. Bruce). Later on, the Hebrews writer reminds certain Jewish Christians who are in danger of reverting to Judaism: *"Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses"* (Hebrews 10:28). He then poses the question: *"How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace?"* (verse 29).

How serious is apostasy from Christ — **deadly** serious! *"For if these did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth* (i. e., Israel in the wilderness), *much less shall we* (apostate Christians) *escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven"* (Hebrews 12:25). Apostasy = death! Yes, **of course** love is the best motivation for seeing Christ! Yes, **of course** gratitude rather than fear should keep us faithful (Hebrews 12:28). But when love's appeal and gratitude's promptings fail to move the heart, let's not forget: *" . . . our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:29). ✝

Rex Banks works with the Lord's church in Hamilton, New Zealand.

ESCAPING THE DEAD-END PATH OF AGNOSTICISM

Garell L. Forehand

As important as is knowledge in every other setting in life, it is hard to imagine how religion could come to be so commonly assailed by an attitude which asserts that we just can't know anything for certain. And yet, there it is, bombarding us from every angle, whether it be in the questioning of the existence of God, or in the more subtle assertion that we just can't all expect to understand the Bible alike.

Objective Versus Subjective

In every branch of human perception the evidence forces reasonable people to accept the existence of objective truth. To very simplistically distinguish the concepts of objective and subjective matters, let's approach the subject by way of the development of a doctrine. If that matter is objectively true, then we must view it as an **object** which does not depend upon anyone for its existence. In other words, it's there, whether or not I accept it. On the other hand, a subjective reality does not exist except by virtue of its acceptance by one to whom it is **subject**. In other words, the propriety or impropriety of a matter would **for me** be dependent upon or **subject** to how I felt about it. In a nutshell, then, objective truth stands with or without believers, while subjective truth is subject to the individual's perception.

The Bible makes very clear that God's will is **not subjective** (subject to any man's perception). If God's truth were subjective, then the true call to man would be, *"Devise the truth,"* instead of, *"Know the truth."* However, God commands us to come to know His truth, and that truth stands as an object before us, whether or not we come to embrace it. Solomon was inspired to tell us, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus told His apostles that *"the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service"* (John 16:2). God pronounced a great woe on those *"who call evil good, and good evil"* (Isaiah 5:20). You see, we can be sincerely wrong — something that would be impossible were truth merely relative or subjective.

We CAN Know The Truth

The objective truth of God is accessible to us. Those who embrace

philosophical agnosticism are trying to hold to a self-contradictory viewpoint. That type of thinking essentially forces one to declare, "I know for certain that I can't know anything for certain." Do you see the problem? If he's right, he's wrong!

Jesus clearly dismantled that way of thinking when He let us know that objective truth came through Him (John 1:17). That's why He told believers, *"If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31,32). When someone says that we cannot know the truth, he is placing himself in direct contradiction to Jesus Christ Himself. That fact should change everyone's mind about this matter, but, sadly, it doesn't always do that.

Multiple "Understandings" of a Matter Are Misnomers

A form of inverted agnosticism plagues religion today. This view prompts a person to say, "Well, you understand it that way, and I understand it this way. All that matters is that we honestly deal with it the way we understand it!" Looking at that viewpoint in even a cursory fashion will reveal it to be a means of denying that God gave us objective truth. If true, and were we to sincerely approach the Bible in such a way, then none of us could ever be wrong! We've already seen the fallacy of thinking that way.

The truth of the matter is, there is only **one** way to "understand" an objective truth — in the way it was originally intended by the one who authored it. Any other view of it, no matter how sincerely held, is simply **misunderstanding**. And proper understanding of the Lord's words is crucial to our well-being. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus explained, *"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart . . . But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it"* (Matthew 13:19,23). We are required by God to use His Word to test everything before deciding what to do with it. *"Prove all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22). That's why Paul commanded Christians to *"be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17).

Conclusion

What about it? Are you following the crowd down the road of boasted ignorance; or have you striven to turn down the road of truth that is less traveled? May God help us to escape the dead-end path of agnosticism. ✝

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

An Atheist Denies That Which The Devil Admits

Bill Dillon

The Bible says, *"...the devils also believe, and tremble"* (James 2:19), yet an atheist will not go that far. He doesn't believe, period! What are the grounds of disbelief? Some say:

1. "I don't believe in God because I can't see him." But we believe in other things we can't see, namely love, hate, electricity, etc.

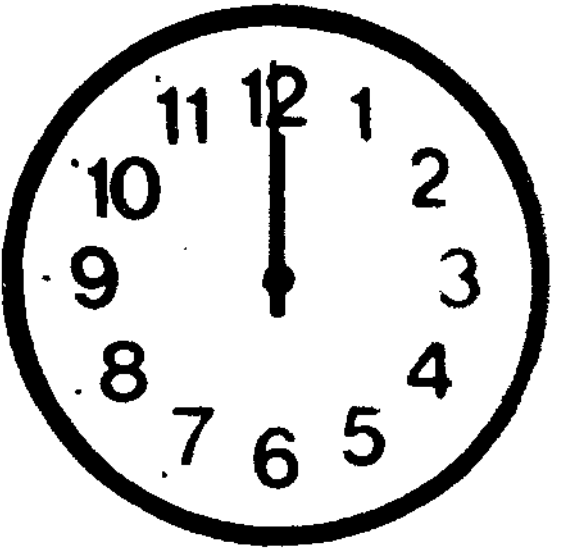
2. "God's existence can't be proven by the scientists." Perhaps scientists don't have big enough laboratories and test tubes! Don't limit God to the measure of our own ideas. The Lord said, *". . . thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. . . ."* (Psalm 50:21).

3. "I can't understand all about God." But the man who believes only what he can understand must have either an enormously large brain or a very small creed. God has given, in the Bible, the specific information we need to know about Him and our responsibilities (Acts 27:22-31; 22:16; Romans 12).

An appeal to the world itself helps us to see the evidence of God. Can there be a work of art without an artist? A design without a designer? An effect without a cause? God's wisdom and power are displayed in nature so that only *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. . . ."* (Psalm 14:1). Just as sure as a house has a builder, so the universe has a maker (Hebrews 3:4).

The certainty of God's existence is not at all affected by persistent denials of Him. Our God, He Is Alive! ✞

Bill Dillon is the preacher for the Lord's church at College and North Streets, Mountain Home, Arkansas, U. S. A.



Were the Days in Genesis 1 24-Hour Periods?

Glenn Colley

In an attempt to marry the beautiful account of creation to the sometimes blasphemous theories of evolution, some have argued that the days of creation in Genesis chapter one were not literal days (i.e., not 24-hour periods). The days, they affirm, were rather long and deceptive periods of time. Someone recently pointed out, "With the Lord a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day" (2 Peter 3:8), to demonstrate, I suppose, that the days of Genesis were AT LEAST 1000 years long each. I believe these ideas to be without biblical merit.

Consider three reasons why I believe the days of Genesis chapter one were literal days, 24-hour periods.

1. Because other passages of Scripture commonly compare obvious 24-hour days with the days of creation.

Exodus 20:8-11 — *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."*

Exodus 31:16,17 — *"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed."*

If God were comparing "day" meaning a thousand or more years, with "day" meaning 24 hours, why is it that there is no mention of any distinction between the two?

2. Because the Bible defines the days of creation as 24-hour periods with the words, *"The evening and the morning were the first day . . ."* (second day, third day, etc.) (Genesis 1:5,8,13).

The fact that the numeral is used demonstrates that a literal day is meant. Alan Highers, in the Freed-Hardeman University lectures, made this point well when he illustrated, "We might say, 'In my grandfather's day . . .' to mean the years when he was younger. But if we say, 'In my grandfather's FIRST day . . .' or, 'In my grandfather's SECOND day . . .', we mean a literal 24-hour time.

The fact that the inspired Moses was so repetitive (each of the six days are numbered and are accompanied by the words, *"The evening and the morning were the . . ."*), seems to indicate that the Lord expected this day-length question.

3. Because it is illogical for one to accept God's creative power when stretched over thousands of years, but deny that same miraculous power when creation was said to be accomplished in six days.

If He has strength to bring about our universe in ANY length of time, why can we not take Him at His word and accept that He did it in six 24-hour periods?

Let's be people of the Book. ✝

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

Christianity Is Proven True by the Nature of Its Rapid Growth

Roger E. Dickson

Throughout Luke's defense of Christianity in the book of Acts, he records the phenomenal growth of the Christian movement. His argument is that man-made religious movements do not grow with such rapid expansion. Man-made religions with which the Roman Court would have been familiar developed slowly. In contrast, Christianity exploded out of Jerusalem with volcanic force. It spread throughout the Roman Empire in a period of about thirty years. Luke argues — How can we explain such phenomenal growth without intervention of the Supernatural? And if the Supernatural is involved in the growth, then we cannot accuse those who believed of being misled by the deceptions of men.

In the book of Acts Luke records the phenomenal church growth at the very beginning of the Christian movement. On Pentecost, *"Those who gladly received his* (Peter's) *word were baptized; and that day about* ***three thousand*** *souls were added to them"* (2:41). *"And the Lord* ***added to the church daily*** *those who were being saved"* (2:47). The movement expanded. *"Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about* ***five thousand"*** (4:4). *"And believers were increasingly added to the Lord,* ***multitudes of both men and women"*** (5:14). They kept preaching and teaching Jesus everywhere (5:42). *"And the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples* ***multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,*** *and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith"* (6:7).

The Christians were then scattered everywhere (8:4). In Samaria *"****multitudes*** *with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip"* (8:6). ***"They were multiplied"*** (9:31). In Joppa, *"****many*** *believed on the Lord"* (9:42). After Herod died, *"the word of God* ***grew and multiplied"*** (12:24). Around Antioch of Pisidia, *"the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region"* (13:49). After the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, *"they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had*

opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (15:35).

The disciples continued *"teaching and preaching the word of the Lord"* (15:35). In Thessalonica *"a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas"* (17:4). In Corinth, *"many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized"* (18:8). Out of Ephesus *"the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed"* (19:20).

Luke's argument is clear and his defense is unquestionable. How would the skeptics answer the phenomenal growth of Christianity by using the measuring statistics of how ordinary religions have developed throughout the years? We cannot explain the growth of Christianity by applying the methods of growth that are used to measure man-made religions. Luke's challenge, therefore, is that we cannot answer the argument for the rapid growth of Christianity without the intervention of the Supernatural. ✝

Roger E. Dickson is the Director of International School of Biblical Studies in Cape Town, South Africa.

NO AMOUNT OF TRUTH IN THE HEAD MAKES UP FOR A LACK OF LOVE IN THE HEART.

— Selected

How do I find the way out?

If all of us are sinners, the most important information we can learn is the method for cleansing our souls. More than food and housing, we need forgiveness. We need peace of heart. How do we find the way out? How do we avoid the penalty for sin, which is spiritual death?

The Bible declares in Romans 8:1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

If escape is in Christ Jesus, where do we learn about Him? In John 5:39, Jesus said, *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."*

Sometimes people deliberately avoid studying, hoping that they will be spared punishment, even if they are wrong, because of their 'ignorance'. But ignorance is no excuse. We must search to learn the truth. We owe this to ourselves and to those under our influence.

Next: **Was the message spoken by God?**

The Book of Philippians for adults

Cross out the letters of the false statements.
Write the remaining letters on the line below, beginning at the bottom.

D Paul wrote the book of Philippians.
H Paul was writing to other prisoners.
R The saints at Philippi were partners with Paul in the Gospel.
O We are encouraged to love more and more.
S Because Paul was beaten and in prison, his ministry was hindered.
L Christ will be honored either in life or death.
N Once we believe in Christ, we don't have to suffer.
E Paul's joys would be complete if everyone would be of the same mind.
H Paul encouraged us to prefer each other.
O Paul objected to those who preached Christ from wrong motives.
T Christ's life is to be our example for living.
N At Jesus' name, every knee shall bow and tongue confess Jesus is Lord.
E It is all right to grumble when asked to help in the church.
L Paul was going to send Timothy and Barnabas to Phillipi.
I Epaphroditus nearly died for the sake of Christ.
H Paul tired of writing encouragement to the people of Philippi.
E Whatever gain Paul had in himself, he counted it as loss.
C Paul continued to press on toward the goal of the upward call of God.
S Because of Paul's ancestry, he was righteous in God's eyes.
I Our bodies will be changed to be like Christ's.
T Everyone at the church was in harmony and agreement.
O We should not be anxious about anything.
U There were no Christians in Caesar's household when Paul was in Rome.
J We should be content in whatever situation we are.
E Christ will help us in all things.
C Epaphroditus kept the gift that was sent to Paul.
R God will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

_____

-Philippians 4:4a

Perfect Morality Found In the Example of Jesus Christ

Coleman K. Allmond

There is no need to hide our heads in the sand with such a subject as this, because at the heart of every problem in our society today there is a problem with the heart of mankind. The Bible heart has to do with the mind, intellect, emotions, and will of mankind.

Hear what the Scriptures say regarding the heart: *"As one thinketh in his heart so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7); *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23); *" . . . out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"* (Matthew 12:34); Jeremiah 17:9 — *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* These and many other Scriptures led our Lord Jesus Christ to say, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness and blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man"* (Matthew 15:19,20).

Therefore, our speech and our actions or deeds determine when we are right or wrong morally. Wrong is always wrong, and there is no right way to do a wrong thing.

Morality relates to principles of right and wrong in behavior or manner of life (lifestyle). Webster says that morality means a doctrine or system of morals . . . particularly moral principles or rules of conduct. Let us consider the system of morality that Jesus Christ gave to the human family. Since Jesus never sinned, He is therefore a perfect example (1 Peter 2:21-25).

The attributes or characteristics of the moral system of Christ are revealed exclusively in the Holy Scriptures. Man is unable to provide a code of conduct that meets ALL needs, of ALL people, of ALL nations for ALL time (Jeremiah 10:23). Nothing in the history of mankind has come remotely near the revealed moral code of Jesus Christ! John Locke correctly said: "To give a man full knowledge of true morality, I would send him to no other book than the New Testament."

The moral system of Christ likewise calls upon all to be like Christ and His Heavenly Father.

The great apostle Paul challenged us to imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). His morality calls for godliness, holiness, and purity (Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 1:15,16; 1 John 3:3; Matthew 5:8). As the offspring of God, made in His image and likeness, we have a common origin, face similar problems, and have a common destiny in that we will all be judged by the same standard; thus, His morality is universal and for all time.

The moral code of Christ is based upon two great fundamentals — (1) *"Love God,"* and (2) *"Love thy neighbor as thyself"* (Luke 10:27). This morality also insists that I think not just of myself, but of how my conduct might affect others. It causes mankind to glorify God in all we do, and proclaims a final day of judgment when all wrongs will be righted, when all that has been sown in this life shall be reaped (Galatians 6:7; 2 Corinthians 5:10), and the ultimate rewards given (James 1:12).

The moral code of Jesus Christ has stood the test of time. Men of every nation and rank have praised its grandeur. No other code has equalled its power to reform and elevate mankind and nations. It is as relevant today as when first given because it came from heaven, not from men. Its heavenly origin presupposes an author with unlimited knowledge, one Who is totally just, right, and good. Therefore, we can heartily sing the song written by L. O. Sanderson: "How precious is the Book divine, By inspiration given! Bright as a lamp its precepts shine, To guide my soul to heaven. Holy Book divine! Precious treasure mine! Lamp to my feet and a light to my way, To guide me safely home." ✞

Coleman K. Allmond is an evangelist for the 61-South Church of Christ in Natchez, Mississippi, U. S. A.

Probably the Bible which is falling apart belongs to someone who isn't.

God`s Will and Man`s Whims

Dalton Key

The Word of God and the ideas of man are not always in perfect agreement. Observe:

Man says, "Love for God is the important thing, not the keeping of commandments." God, in 1 John 5:3, teaches, *"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."* And again, Jesus made clear, *"If you love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15).

Man says, "One church is just as good as another. Join the church of your choice." God, speaking through His Son, promised to build but one church (Matthew 16:18). The Word of God speaks of this church as Christ's body (Ephesians 1:22,23) and affirms, *"There is one body"* (Ephesians 4:4).

Man says, "Baptism may be important, but it has nothing to do with salvation." God's Word states clearly, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). And, from 1 Peter 3:21, *"Baptism doth also now save us."*

Man says, "God is love, and a loving God will not permit anyone to be lost." God does affirm His love toward all people (1 John 4:16; John 3:16), but He has also promised a time *"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

Man says, "Our worship of God is a personal and private thing. We need no scriptural authority for worshipping as we do. As long as the heart is sincere, all worship is accepted." God's Word teaches, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23,24). And what is "truth"? Jesus, in prayer to the Father, said, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17).

My question is this: Will we succumb to the whims of man, or will we submit to the will of God? ✝

Dalton Key is editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the North Amarillo Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, U.S.A.

Killing the Prophets

Jack W. Carter

In reading about Jeremiah the prophet we find that this is indeed a significant period of Bible history. It was for the people of Judah, and it brings its vital message to every subsequent generation of God's people.

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet. He was a weeping prophet. He became an angry prophet, and he even finally urged God to punish the people because they were so determined to oppose God's message and so eager to kill the messenger.

I have always found the disposition of humanity very engaging in this regard. Through many centuries of God's dealings with His people, He used prophets to reveal His will. Most of the time the people did not like the message that came from God, so they often sought to kill the messenger. Why?

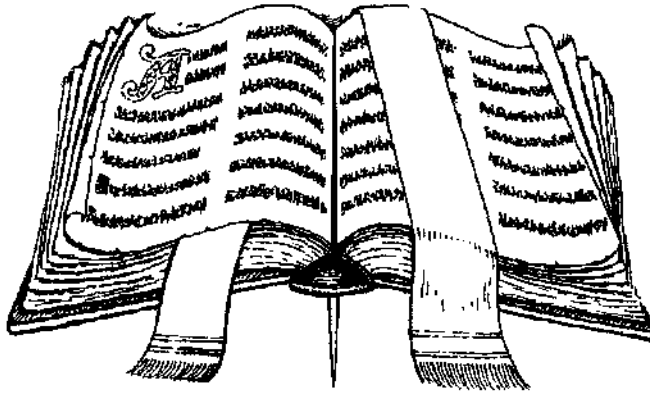
Would killing the messenger nullify the message? Would it alter the force of the message? Is it conceivable that any kind of an advantage could be obtained by killing the messenger?

The only answer that I have been able to come up with has two parts to it. First of all, if the message is not what the people want to hear, they will try to convince themselves that the message really isn't coming from God. As it was in the time of Jeremiah (and so many prophets), the people sought other prophets who claimed to be speaking for God and who had a more acceptable message. This has never changed. Secondly, even while doing this, most of them knew in their hearts which was the true message. They just didn't want to accept it, and they most certainly did not really want to be reminded of it. It was a kind of "defy God now and maybe we can escape the consequences later" situation.

Killing the messenger is in no way an intelligent act. It serves no genuine purpose and offers no real advantage to anyone. The *messenger* is an incidental part of God's communicating with His people. It is always the *message* that must capture our attention.

You see, no matter what happens to the messenger, the message never changes. Many, many messengers have been killed, *but the message will never die. It will judge us in the last day.* ✝

Jack W. Carter preaches the Gospel of Christ in Castle Rock, Colorado, U.S.A.



You Can Trust the Bible

Salvador B. Cariaga

There are some people who wonder if the Bible as we have it today can be trusted. They ask, "How do we know that someone a long time ago did not rewrite or change it?" Perhaps you too have wondered the same. In this brief article, we would like to reassure you that the Bible can be trusted.

First of all, the Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. Religious people did not just make this up. The great Apostle Paul declared, *"All scripture is inspired by God . . ."* (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus assured His disciples that *"It is not you who speaks, but it is the spirit of the Father speaking through you"* (Matthew 10:20). Peter admitted that *"No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God"* (2 Peter 1:21).

Second, Bible manuscripts discovered from as far back as the third century have been consistently the same through the years. True, there are some minor differences, such as spelling, missing words, and even a few missing sentences. However, they are minor and have not altered the saving message of the Bible. Today, we have over 5,000 extant Greek manuscripts available, an unbelievable number, considering how old the Bible is and the kind of persecution it has gone through.

The third reason for trusting the Bible is the life-changing message

in its pages. It offers hope, faith, peace, joy, and salvation. It provides shelter in the time of storm, strength to the weary, and light to those in darkness. The Bible has served millions of people through centuries and generations. It has helped them overcome persecutions, trials, and tribulations. The Bible has led them to victorious living.

You, too, can draw power, strength, and wisdom from the Bible. Read it, study it, and meditate on it. ✝

Salvador B. Cariaga is a gospel preacher in Cebu City, Philippines.

Your Bible

Open it when you're in sorrow
That God may speak to your heart;
He will give you hope for the morrow,
Hope that will never depart.

Open it up in your gladness,
Open it when happy your day;
Let sunshine be turned to sadness,
If you are tempted to stray.

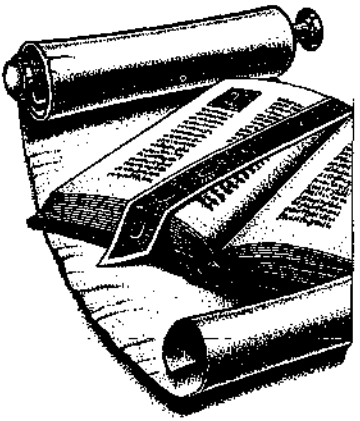
Open it in your youth,
It will help in all your trials
To know God's wonderful truth,
When Satan your heart beguiles.

Open it when you are grown
With burdens so heavy to bear,
And know you are never alone,
Your load He wishes to share.

Open it when in old age,
You long to be with your Lord,
And you will find on each page
The hope of eternal reward.

—Unknown

It Was There All the Time!



Frances Parr

Our wonderful, powerful God created everything that has been created. He knows all about endless space, what's inside the earth, what makes the wind blow, and how the human body can begin as a microscopic egg and grow to be a man or a woman. He also knew, from the beginning, that we would be confused and not always understand. He caused special people to write books that explained certain things He knew we needed to know. All these writings are put together in one book — the Bible.

The Bible is a very special book and we can learn many things by reading it carefully. It is important to read the Bible and to see how much God loves us. He loved us so much that He sent Jesus to make a way for us to get to heaven.

Even after studying the Bible, we still will not understand everything about God and His creation. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that all that pertains to life and godliness has been revealed. This means that all we need to know to become a Christian and go to heaven is recorded in the Bible.

The Bible can also be *fun* to read. Sometimes we have read or herard stories so repeatedly that we think we know all about them. Then one day, reading that same story again, we'll see something we've never seen before! That's because we have grown more mature in our comprehension and knowledge of God. *Those words were there all the time, but we just didn't understand them!*

History books tell us that long ago people thought the earth was flat. Many felt if a person wasn't careful, he might fall right off the edge into nothing and keep on falling forever. In reading Psalm 98:3 (*"All the ends of the earth have*

seen the salvation of our God") and Psalm 135:7 (*"He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth"*), one might agree with that. However, Isaiah 40:22 describes the earth in a different way, one which astronauts' photographs have proven to be the correct description. Isaiah says of God, *"It is He who sits above the* ***circle*** *of the earth."*

Early navigators discovered currents in the sea which were like giant rivers flowing in certain directions. If ships sailed in these currents, they could go faster with less fuel or wind for the sails. David had already spoken of the fish which swim in *"the paths of the sea"* (Psalm 8:8).

A few years ago someone noticed that the eastern edge of South America fit nicely into the southwest part of Africa. Then it was observed that other land masses, now many miles away from each other, seemed to have been attached. Genesis 1:9 indicates that at creation all waters were gathered together and dry land appeared, that also all together.

The Israelites were God's special people, and He took care of their every need. Sometimes they felt that God had gone away, and they worried that He wasn't near enough to know their needs. In his book, the prophet Isaiah told the people to *"behold your God!"* Look at Isaiah 40 and behold or see God as Isaiah described Him.

In the Old Testament we can read about David. He loved God very much and sang praises to Him. He wrote many songs about the wonder and power of God. We can read David's songs in the Bible in the book of Psalms. Find your own favorite chapters or read Psalms 100 and 104.

After reading about God's greatness, take a family walk, noticing especially the beautiful things God has put on the earth for people to enjoy. Make lists of things that are special to each member of the family.

When you are back home, end with a time of sharing and a devotional. Try to always look for and notice the ever-changing wonders of God. Not only has He provided for our needs, but He has also added many things that are beautiful and just for our pleasure.

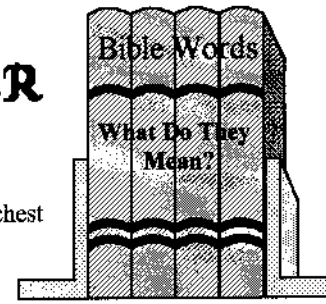
Reading God's Book, the Bible, is never boring. The stories are as fresh and applicable today as they were when the inspired authors wrote them. As a Christian grows, there are endless levels and depths to be discovered and explored.

Truly, our God is all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-wonderful! The Bible tells us so! ✞

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, 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 context found in Romans 15. After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.

1. **infirmities** n.— A: hospitals. B: error arising from weakness of mind. C: strengths. D: handicapped
2. **weak** adj.— A: drained. B: tired. C: impotent or powerless. D: limited.
3. **neighbor** adj.— A: one nearby in need. B: one who lives next door. C: a friend. D: of like ethnic background.
4. **edification** n.— A: to build up or erect. B: to learn. C: to be faithful. D: to tear down.
5. **Christ** adj.— A: the Son of God. B: Jesus. C. Son of Joseph. D. anointed of God.
6. **reproaches** n.— A. an ass, donkey. B: spoken against. C: castigation. D: assassination of character.
7. **aforetime** v.— A: predestinated. B: previously set forth. C: musical beat. D: a related incident.
8. **patience** n.— A: unrest. B: at ease. C: at peace. D: continuance.
9. **comfort** n.— A: to speak kind words. B: to summon for help and consolation. C: a warm blanket. D: invigorate
10. **hope** n.— A: to wish for. B: a longing. C: desire. D: assured, joyful expectation
11. **learning** n.— A: rote. B: doctrine, or teaching. C: memorizing. D: lore
12. **grant** v.— A: permission. B: scholarship. C: to bestow a gift for one's advantage. D: grace
13. **likeminded** v.— A: to cherish the same views. B: to be fond of each other. C: travel together. D: identical twins
14. **circumcision** n.— A: an operation for infants. B: to cut around. C: covenant. D: to be confirmed.
15. **confirm** v.— A: to raise one's hand. B: to swear. C: to give testimony. D: to make sure.
16. **Gentiles** n.— A: nations. heathens. B: Americans. C: civilians. D: those who are gentle.
17. **Holy Ghost** n.— A: a mystical power that inflicts seizures. B: Clean, Awe-full Spirit. C: to get religion and shout. D: a Halloween spirit.

Answers to

"It helps to Enrich Your Bible Word Power"

1. **infirmities**—(Gk. asthenema) B: error arising from weakness of mind

2. **weak**—(Gk. adunatos) C: impotent or powerless. Those in the church who have not yet reached mature faith. See Heb. 5:12-14.

3. **neighbor**—(Gk. plesion) A: one nearby in need; without regard to race or ethnic background. See Lu. 10:25.

4. **edification**—(Gk. oikodome) A: to build or erect. In this context, to always do in the presence of other Christians that which would increase their faith and never cause them to doubt.

5. **Christ**—(Gk. Christos) D: anointed (of God); to be chosen for the specific task of redeeming souls from sin.

6. **reproaches**—(Gk. onarion) A: a small ass; thus to speak of someone as a dumb beast; to ascribe to them a demeaning name.

7. **aforetime**—(Gk. prographo) B: previously set forth. Literally, pro = before, grapho = write, thus to have been previously written as the O.T. before Jesus.

8. **patience**—(Gk. hupomone) D: continuance. By reading Moses' Law and seeing how those who believed under trials were those blessed of God, so should all Christians continue faithful under persecution to receive the blessing of faith.

9. **comfort**—(Gk. paraklesis) B: to summon for help and consolation. As one who would summon a lawyer when being taken to court. The Holy Scriptures reinforce us when we need faith under severe trials. Jesus is also said to be our advocate. I John 2:1.

10. **hope**—(Gk. elpis) D: assured, joyful expectation. See Hebrews 11 where the O.T. faithful prevailed through faith, and Christ, their hope, was realized even beyond their death. So we must have assured joyful hope that he will come again even if we do not live to see it.

11. **learning**—(Gk. didaskolia) B: doctrine or teaching.

12. **grant**—(Gk. didomi) c: to bestow a gift for one's advantage. God has granted to us the right to repent, Acts 11:18.

13. **likeminded**—(Gk. phroneo) A: to cherish the same views. Christian are joined together in a common hope.

14. **circumcision**—(Gk. peritome) B: circum= around; cision= cut; thus, to cut around. A term used for the Jews as each male had to be circumcised on the 8th day as part of their covenant with God. The Christian is to be spiritually circuncised in heart, an act of repentance. See Col. 2:11

15. **confirm**—(Gk. bebaioo) D: to make sure. The O.T. prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, therefore made sure.

16. **Gentiles**—(Gk. ethnos) A: nations, heathens. Those not included in the O.T. covenant of Abraham

17. **Holy Ghost**—(Gk. hagios; pneuma) B: clean, awful, meaning "awe full" spirit; filled with awe; thus awesome in thought of holiness.

Vocabulary Scale

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

Moral Issues

David Pharr

Moral issues are not to be decided by the attitudes of the world, but by the teaching of God's Word. There are things which the world tends to accept, but which are contrary to biblical morality and biblical religion.

Abortion is wrong because it is the taking of human life. People who defend abortion argue that an expectant mother has a right to have an abortion because "it is her own body." But this is not true. The child within her is another person, whom she has no right to destroy. Legally abortion may be permitted, but God still says, *"Thou shalt not kill."*

Drugs for recreational use (not as legitimate medicine) are condemned by the same principles that condemn intoxicating beverages. Marijuana, cocaine, etc. are not legal in most countries, but even if they were legalized they would still be wrong because drunkenness is wrong, whether induced by alcohol or by any other drug.

Gambling may be socially acceptable, but it is condemned by several Biblical principles. The spirit behind gambling is covetousness (see Luke 12:15). One can gain by gambling only at the expense of another. Often those who lose in gambling do so at the expense of their families. As Christians, we live by the golden rule and seek the welfare of others, never their harm (Matthew 7:12).

Pornography in books, magazines, films, etc. is forbidden by such passages as Matthew 5:28; 1 Peter 2:11; and Colossians 3:5. That which produces lustful thoughts, whether by words or pictures, is wrong. Of growing concern is the increase of suggestive and explicit scenes and language on television, in regular programming, and especially on cable networks.

Profanity is commonplace, but Christians are expected to guard their speech. Any expression that uses God's name (or Christ's name) in vain is wrong (Exodus 20:7). This is the reason for Jesus' strong statement against swearing in Matthew 5:33-37. This would also include the profane use of "hell,"

"damn," etc. and slang euphemisms such as "gosh," "gee," etc., which are merely corrupted forms of "God" and "Jesus." There are also words and expressions which may not profane God's name, but which are vulgar and offensive to decent people. Read Ephesians 4:29.

Dancing is a popular social practice and has many forms, but most of it is conducive to stimulating lust. When people who are not married to each other engage in the embrace of romantic dancing it is unlikely that impure thoughts will not be involved. The same is true regarding the provocative movements of some of the new styles of dancing. Lasciviousness is sin (Galatians 5:19).

Homosexuality is plainly condemned (1 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:24,27; Leviticus 18:22). It is tragic that the modern world is trying to make this kind of perverted wickedness acceptable.

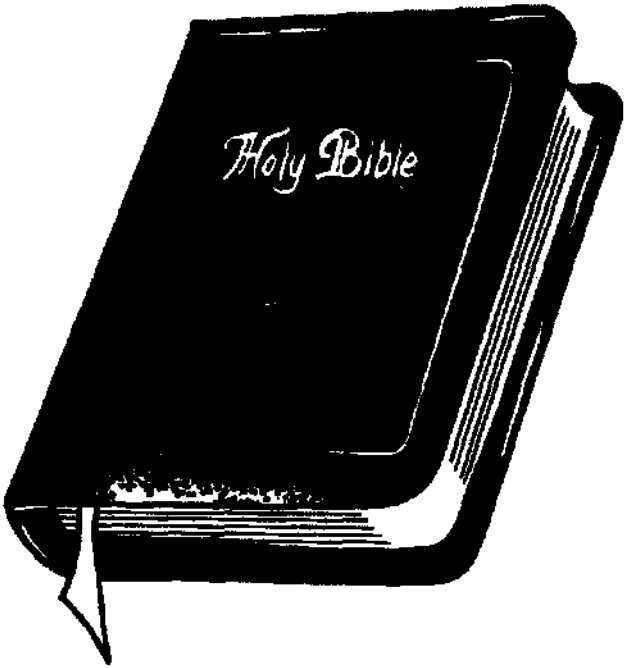
Lodges and fraternal orders are many and varied. Some such organizations may be innocent associations. Others, however, are involved in sinful activities such as drinking, gambling, etc. There are also organizations that are religious in nature. These have doctrines and ceremonies which are without Bible authority, even though they may claim a biblical basis. Some people regard them as adequate substitutes for the church. One should be especially wary of any organization that involves secret oaths, religious rites, that demands extreme loyalty, or that promises spiritual or eternal benefits. ✝

David Pharr preaches for the Lord's church in Clinton, Tennessee, U. S. A.

Do More

Do more than exist —
live.
Do more than touch —
feel.
Do more than look —
observe.
Do more than read —
absorb.
Do more than hear —
listen.
Do more than listen —
undertand.
Do more than think —
ponder.
Do more than talk —
say something.

— Anonymous



TRUE OR FALSE

Tony Lalli

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

Today our society seems to be revolving around reality and non-reality. People are wondering what is true and what is false. I saw a television commercial once that showed a person in a dilemma because every product he picked up or everything he looked at was in some way false. That is, it wasn't what it pretended to be. Then, of course, there came along one product that was able to do everything it claimed it could do. It was true to the purchaser!

How like the Word of God is

the above illustration! Many people are in a dilemma concerning life. So often life does not turn out to be what it pretends it is. And, in too many cases, lives are ruined before the lesson is learned. Pilate is an excellent example of one being in such a position. Pilate asked Jesus, *"Are you a king then?"* Jesus answered, *"You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice."* Pilate then asked, *"What is truth?"* (John 18:37,38).

In his question we can see that Pilate has reached the point where he is not sure what the truth is. He had lived one way all his life and had been around the Jews long enough to be familiar with their religion. Now he has heard of Jesus and His teachings. It is no wonder he asks, *"What is truth?"*

The sad thing about this man is that he washed his hands of the whole affair. He preferred continuing in the same situation in which he had always lived and taking his chances with the consequences. It is a shame that so many people today choose to continue in their present situation instead of seeking the truth.

The Psalmist says, *"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endure forever"* (Psalm 119:160). In John 17:17, Jesus prays, *"Sanctify them in your truth: your word is truth."* We therefore see that to be sanctified in God, we must abide in His truth, and that truth is His Word!

For one seeking what is true, there is only one "product" that will qualify concerning man's salvation — the teaching of Jesus. And He teaches us to do the will of God. *"Not all who say unto me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). ✝

Tony Lalli preaches for the Lord's church in Pittsburg, Kansas, U. S. A.

When the Spirit Stirs

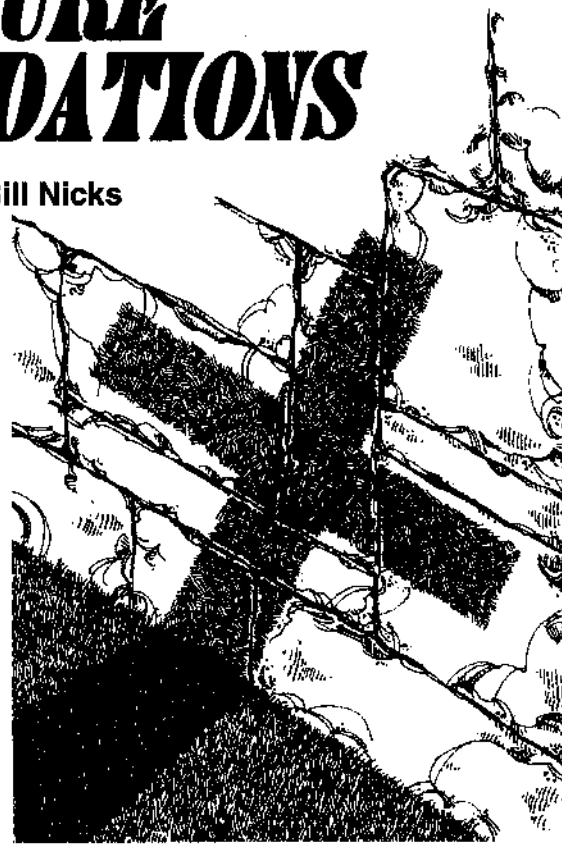
Be not encrusted with the barnacles of yesterday
Which seethe and drip with
The indignation of corruption —

But rather bathe in His Righteousness
When the Spirit stirs
Waters to healing

— Ima Keeling Huff

SURE FOUNDATIONS

Bill Nicks



In an age of skepticism, we long for that about which we can be positive. There are many ways that *"seem right, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). We have in our generation passed through a sexual revolution, a feminist movement, and laws made by governing bodies that legalize abortion. The church is affected by these aberrations in our society.

There is a way to be sure and certain. *"Behold, I lay in Zion . . . a sure foundation"* (Isaiah 28:16). This foundation of which Isaiah spoke was fulfilled in Christ and the church, and the principles governing it in the everlasting Gospel of Christ. *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matthew 24:35). *"And the scripture cannot be broken"* (John 10:35). *"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:11). *"Upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

By the law God gave man regarding marriage, we can be positive that God allows man only one wife (1 Corinthians 7:2), and woman only one husband. We can be positive that when this bond is broken by fornication, only the innocent party has the right to remarry (Matthew 19:9). Otherwise, "except" has no meaning at all. We can be positive that homosexuality and lesbianism are perversions of God's natural heterosexual plan (Genesis 2:24; Romans 1:24-28). I am not being arrogant, but am humbly pleading for a return to God's way. I am for God's plan in marriage and am positive it is right; therefore I must stand opposed (at the risk of being termed "negative") to any deviation from the right way.

By God's law forbidding murder, we can be positive that abortion is sinful, because it is killing a human baby (Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9). Whether we consider the Old Testament or the New, we are sure that it is forbidden in both. Whether it is a babe in the womb (**brephos**) (Luke 1:41), or one born from the womb (same word, Luke 2:12), or an elderly person in a nursing home, it is still wrong to take human life.

In like manner, we can be sure that God's will is for men (**aner**) to pray publicly and teach publicly, and for women to teach only other women and children (1 Timothy 2:12; Titus 2:3-5).

There are some things we cannot know for sure, such as the age of the earth (though we believe it is recent, in contrast to the billions of years assigned by evolutionists), nor do we have scriptural assurance that God will sanction instrumental music in worship. The reason is simple. There is no evidence in the New Testament for its use in worship. There are no commands, examples, or inferences for its use, but rather, the New Testament records that Christians *sang* in worship to God. We can be positive that the Lord has given us a pattern for the one body to follow *in all things* (2 Timothy 1:13), and that one body is the church which Jesus purchased with His own blood (Colossians 1:18,24; Acts 20:28).

There are many who today are turning from the old paths to follow ways about which we cannot be positive. Let us *"prove all things and hold fast that which is good"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). In a world bent on apostasy from the truth, let us continue in His Word, for only then are we *"disciples indeed"* (John 8:31). As David of old said, *"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"* (Psalm 11:3). ✝

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and is now serving on the Island of Trinidad in the West Indies.

The Beauty and Importance of Baptism

Sunny David

The greatest need of every man and woman is salvation from sin. The greatest message of God for mankind is: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). Again, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). And, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God gave His Son to die on the cross and thus to become the propitiation for our sins. This is what **God** has done for our salvation. What must **we** do to be saved from our sins?

According to God's way of salvation one must believe in Christ, that He has died for the sinners; one must repent, or turn away from sins and ignorance, and thus become dead to sin; one must confess Christ as the Son of God; and then one must be baptized, buried or immersed in the body of water to portray the burial and the resurrection of the new man. This is the process by which a person is born anew spiritually, and thus becomes entitled to enter the kingdom of God, as Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:5, *"Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*

One believes with the heart,

repents in the mind, confesses with the mouth, and is baptized in water to portray the good news of salvation that Christ has died for our sins and was buried and has risen again according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Thus baptism is one of the most beautiful and important acts of obedience for salvation. Through the act of baptism the good news of Christ's death, burial and resurrection is proclaimed. Before salvation is attained, the forgiveness of sins gained, and the gift of the Holy Spirit is given, one must be baptized. Hear what the Savior said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Notice what the Spirit-filled apostle Peter taught, *"Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38).

All spiritual blessings, according to the Bible, are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Colossians 1:14 says that in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Now, how do we get into Christ to reach all spiritual blessings and redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins? Let the inspired apostle Paul answer this. He explained in Galatians 3:27, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* At another place, in Romans 6:3-5, Paul wrote, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."*

Through these passages of Scripture not only do we learn the great importance of the act of baptism, but we also learn how beautifully the act of baptism portrays and exhibits and signifies the good news of Christ's death and burial and resurrection. No wonder, then, as to why the Lord included baptism in His great commission to His disciples. As He was returning back to heaven, after accomplishing the enormous task of man's salvation, almost His very last words to them were, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19). ✞

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a radio evangelist for much of India.

Quick Commentary On Crucial Verses

I Pet. 3:20-21

Extremely patient, God wants all to be saved. (See 2 Pet.3:9)

All saved within the ark. Today, all the saved are added to Christ's church Acts. 2:47

Only "the few" who obey God's word will be saved (See Mt.7:13ff.)

"God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure wherein even baptism doth also now save us . . ."

God's element for destroying all unbelievers was the same as for saving all believers in his word

Now, God saves the obedient and judges the rebellious, just as then

As believers entered the one ark for safety, the baptized believers are added only to Christ's church (See Ac. 2:38-47; 20:28)

Believing Christ's word to be immersed in water (See Mk. 16:16 and Ro.6:4)

—Fenter Northern

JUST ANY NAME WON'T DO

Brian W. Jones

I want to belong to a church that has a name which is found in the Bible. I also want to belong to a church that follows the teachings of Christ. Just any name won't do!

Many folks say that the name of a church doesn't matter much. However, a church must wear the proper name and teach the whole counsel of God in order for it to be the church spoken of in Scripture.

The church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2). A bride should wear the groom's name. We become members of God's family at the point of baptism (1 Timothy 3:15). Should not His family wear His name? The purchaser of the church is Christ (Acts 20:28). Doesn't the purchaser of a body have the right to name it?

The Bible gives several descriptive names for the church: *"church of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:2); *"church of the firstborn"* (Hebrews 12:23); *"churches of Christ"* (Romans 16:16); *"body of Christ"* (Colossians 1:24); *"bride of Christ"* (Revelation 21:2); *"house of God"* (1 Timothy 3:15). God and Christ's names are glorified in these names. These are some of the names that **God** has chosen for **His** church.

So, the next time someone asks you — "What difference does a name make?" — offer to write that person a check without signing your name. Without the authorized name, the check is invalid. Wouldn't it likewise be true that a church without the proper name is also invalid? A check with a valid signature and insufficient funds is worthless. Wouldn't it likewise be true that a church with a valid name, but unbiblical teachings is also worthless?

Please think on these things. ✞

Brian W. Jones is the preacher for the East High St. Church of Christ in Springfield, Ohio, U. S. A.

I Will Build My Church

Ray Hawk

Did Jesus promise to build His church? According to Matthew 16:18, He did. Did that church (called out assembly) begin on the first Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension? Yes (Acts 2:1-47). Notice the biblical data about this called out group.

1. It was the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).
2. Christ was its head (Colossians 1:18).
3. He has but one body (Ephesians 1:22,23).
4. Those who had believed in Christ, repented of their past sins, and confessed His name, entered it by water immersion (Galatians 3:27).
5. When the Gospel was preached and people did what was commanded to become a child of God, the Lord added them to His Son's body (Acts 2:47).
6. When Paul and others went out to preach, and people responded to the Gospel, they left behind the same church (1 Corinthians 1:10).
7. When men tried to denominate it, Paul condemned it, and Christ prayed the opposite of it (John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13).
8. The apostles and prophets were members of it (Ephesians 2:20).
9. Philip and those he preached to and baptized were members of it (Acts 8:12).
10. The Corinthian saints were members of it (1 Corinthians 1:2).

11. The Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, etc. were members of it (Romans 16:16; Galatians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1).

12. This church was found in every community where the Gospel was preached, believed, and obeyed (Matthew 28:19,20).

13. This church was neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant.

14. It had but one head, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23).

15. Outside its membership were the lost (Ephesians 2:12).

16. Inside this body were the saved (Acts 2:47; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

17. They (the saved) were the children of God (Galatians 3:26,27).

18. They were born again (John 3:1-5; 1 Peter 1:22,23).

19. They were God's new spiritual house, holy and royal priesthood, chosen generation (chosen people), holy nation, and peculiar people (people belonging to God) (1 Peter 2:5,9).

20. They were married to Christ (Romans 7:4).

If it was possible, in the first century, to be a member of this church (called out assembly) which Jesus built, why not today? Is it possible to be just a Christian, one who is a member of the body of Christ, without being in a denominational body? The biblical answer is "Yes!" ✝

Ray Hawk preaches for the Campbell Street church in Jackson, Tennessee, U. S. A.

Why?

As I journey through this land
Of sin and pain and death,
I see people all around me
Strive for things they cannot get,

And I think about the question
Asked by Christ long years ago:
Wherein is all the profit
If a man shall lose his soul?

— Betty Burton Choate

Restoring the Church

Bobby Dockery

Long ago in Soulac, France, a farmer stumbled over a stake in a field. Attempting to dig it out, he discovered it was firmly attached to something buried much deeper in the ground. Others came to his aid and were amazed to find the "stake" was the steeple of a buried church building. Across the centuries, the ravages of nature and the debris of war had so completely covered the building that it had been completely forgotten. Eventually, the entire building was uncovered and restored to use.

This episode symbolizes the great need of our modern religious world! Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ came to this earth and died to establish His church (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18). Across the centuries, however, the church which Christ built has often been lost from view underneath the rubble and debris of man-made tradition, innovation, and opinion (1 Timothy 4:1-7).

In the 20th Century, Christianity can go forward only by going back — back to the New Testament and the church of the 1st Century. Our divided, tradition-burdened religious world needs to dig beneath the rubble of modern denominationalism to rediscover the church Jesus built. We must restore New Testament Christianity. We must go back to the Bible! ✝

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preaches for the Baldwin Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U. S. A.

Yes, Tradition Has Value

Hollis Miller

No person familiar with the Scriptures would affirm that human tradition is divinely inspired. But that doesn't mean tradition has no value; sometimes it has great value. Consider this statement: "Every culture and society exudes a certain critical glue, an undergirding on life and reality that preserves its cohesiveness. When that adhesive bond deteriorates, the sense of shared community tends to come apart at the seams" (Carl F. H. Henry). This statement is not true because a conservative theologian made it. It is true because of its own innate worth.

When children honor the tradition of saying, "Yes, Sir" and "Yes, Ma'am" to adult men and women, recognition of and respect for the older generation is manifest (see Leviticus 19:32). The same value principle is involved when gentlemen open doors for, and rise to give their chairs to, ladies. Disrespect for such traditions is usually accompanied by a corresponding loss of respect for the values the traditions represent.

But what about the church? Does tradition have value there? It surely does! No, tradition, as normally understood, may not be divinely ordained, but it is usually "common sense" ordained. The way we do things is more often than not the result of trial and error. Songleaders are not commanded by God to stand before the congregation while leading the singing, but doing so is a tradition that has proved itself valuable. Having several men pass contribution baskets down the aisles to worshipers is surely a superior tradition than having worshipers march one by one to a specified place and deposit their gifts. The traditional pulpit is much better than having a preacher sit in a pew and deliver his sermon. Regularly set times for worship are much more appropriate for the majority of Christians than deciding from week to week when the next assembly will be.

Before loosening established traditions that have developed over time, churches do well when they look more deeply into their customs than someone's whim that a different way would be superior. ✝

Hollis Miller is an evangelist in Cadiz, Kentucky, U. S. A.

Worship: Praise or Performance?

Jimmy Jividen

True worship is not a performance to please men, but praise to glorify God. Many seem to have forgotten this truth. Churches try to outdo one another in their pageantry, musical performances, and dramatic productions. Their motive seems to be to please men rather than to praise God.

God does not dwell in physical temples. He is not worshipped by human performances, no matter how beautiful, dramatic, or stimulating they might be. God is God. He desires spiritual worship rather than physical performance. Worship should be directed to God rather than man.

God does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He, Himself, gives to all life and breath and all things (Acts 17:24,25).

True worship is not reciting a memorized, traditional ritual or listening to a musical performance or watching a dramatic presentation of artistic symbols. All of these things are sensory. Their purpose is to stimulate the senses. Their appeal is to the emotional nature of man. Such activity is man-directed, not God-directed.

True worship involves the inner man — the spirit that wills, the mind that understands, and the heart that feels. No human innovation or stimulation can be substituted. Jesus said: *"And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full"* (Matthew 6:5). ✞

Jimmy Jividen is a writer and preacher in Abilene, Texas, U. S. A.

Worship Is...

Ron Bryant

Worship is not a seeking to be noble; it is nobility. It is not seeking to be humble; it is humility. It is not seeking to adore God; it is adoration. It is not seeking to praise God; it is praise.

Worship is the seeking after God, and being found. It is the bowing of the knee, and being lifted higher. It is the pouring out of one's heart, and in the same moment having it filled. It is delighting in God, honoring God, praising God, adoring God, and, without seeking it directly, being changed by God. Worship is God-centered, not man-centered. It is privilege and duty, the least and the most of Christian existence.

Worship is so linked with life that the two can be thought of as one by the Christian. Life is to be a fervent attempt to honor God. Worship is never divorced from life, but is a focus of life. It is out of the beauty of holiness that God is to be worshipped. Homage is to be paid unto God alone. Homage is paid in worship and in service.

But service is not worship. Worship is not service. They each are a vital part of life for the Christian, and each is high and holy. In all of life the believer seeks God and His glory. In all of service the believer seeks God and His glory. In all of worship the believer seeks God and His glory. In all of these, it is the love and the majesty, the mercy and the grace of the Father, that controls. In all of these, it is man choosing to respond to the God who has chosen to love and accept man, and to give life to man in Christ. ✝

Ron Bryant preaches for the Camelback Church of Christ in Phoenix, Arizona, U. S. A.

Ancil Jenkins

In his biography, Dr. C. Everett Koop told of a decision he made while his family was very young. Despite his busy schedule, he decided they would attend church every Sunday. He said, "It was easier to go every Sunday than to decide which Sundays to miss."

It is easy to get hung up on church attendance. Too often we make it the criteria for a person's faithfulness to God. Someone defined faithfulness like this:

"... *really faithful"* means they never miss.

"... *pretty faithful"* means they come more than they miss.

"... *not very faithful"* means they miss more than they come.

"... *He's not faithful at all"* means they do not come at all.

Do not be mistaken, there is definitely a correlation between faithfulness and church attendance. Just coming to the assembly does not mean a person is faithful. Yet a faithful person *will* worship, though attendance in worship services alone is not punching a ticket to heaven. That, by itself, will not get anyone there.

When a person has the right motive, the problem of *which* Sunday to miss will not be a problem. He will be present every Sunday possible.

Perhaps we do not see clearly enough the purpose for which the church comes together.

In the first Corinthian letter, Paul gives some good reasons for public worship. The Corinthian church met for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. Although Paul does not explicitly say this, he does say their worship was so out-of-order that they could not properly partake of the Lord's Supper, implying that this was their purpose (1 Corinthians 11:20). To miss the Lord's Supper is to miss the communion with Christ and the saints (1 Corinthians 10:16). This symbolic meal is a renewal of our covenant with Him. It is a time of reflection on ourselves, our relation with Him and our brothers, and a reflection on our future. If we miss this, we miss a powerful opportunity for spiritual growth.

Our coming together is to be an occasion of edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). Worship is to be a time of singing and prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15). It is to be Spirit-directed and spirited. It is to be orderly, understandable, and impressive, even to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:23,24). We come to worship, not as spectators, but as participants.

The problem with deciding when to attend worship is one of values. Which person are we trying to live for, the inward or the outward man? The inner man will want to be with the church.

When we see worship as this kind of rich, rewarding experience which edifies us and in which we edify others, we will not *want* to miss a Sunday. ✝

Ancil Jenkins preaches for the Sunset Church of Christ in Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

The Lord Had Already Called

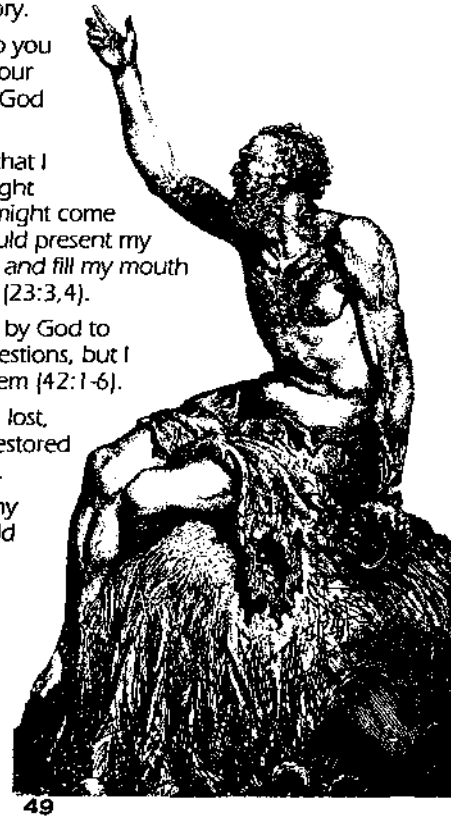
A call came on Sunday morning. "Tell mother not to go to church services this morning; we are coming." But the mother went right on to Bible study and worship anyway. The daughter was furious when she arrived and no one was home to meet her. She said, "I called you and told you that I was coming and you went on to worship anyway." The mother replied, "I'm sorry, dear, but the Lord had already called."

— Anonymous

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 of faithfulness through good times and bad.

1. **100** I was a very rich man in the land of Uz (1:1).
2. **90** Tragedy overtook me (1:13-19).
3. **80** I thought God had become my enemy (10:2,3).
4. **70** I said, "He will not allow me to catch my breath" (9:18).
5. **60** Though Satan had actually been responsible for all of my problems, there is no reference in the Scriptures to indicate that I was ever aware of his part in the story.
6. **50** My wife said, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" (2:9).
7. **40** I declared, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments" (23:3,4).
8. **30** I was challenged by God to answer many questions, but I knew none of them (42:1-6).
9. **20** All that had been lost, and more, was restored to me (42:10-13).
10. **10** In spite of all of my troubles, I died old and full of days (42:17).

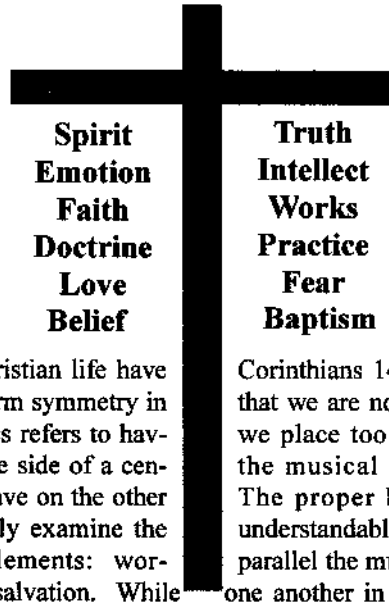


My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

Christian Symmetry

Kenneth Tipton



Does your Christian life have symmetry? The term symmetry in art and mathematics refers to having as much on one side of a central point as you have on the other side. Let us briefly examine the following three elements: worship, service, and salvation. While we do this, we will be making an application of how we need to have symmetry in these areas.

First of all, do you worship in *spirit* and *truth*? Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that the Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23,24). It is not sufficient to have a good *attitude* without correct *doctrine*. At another point, Paul tells us to sing with the *spirit* and also with *understanding* (1 Corinthians 14:15). Is it possible that we are not pleasing to God if we place too much emphasis on the musical sounds and notes? The proper balance is to have understandable biblical lyrics that parallel the music in order to edify one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). Additionally, do you also have a balanced amount of *emotion* and *intellect* involved in your worship? Are you only touched in your heart by your feelings, or do you equally seek stimulation for your mind as you consider the depths of God's Word?

The second area of biblical symmetry is *faith* and *works* (service). James said that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). He

clarifies the concept even more in the next verse by challenging us to show our faith *without* works, and he will show his faith *by* his works. One can be out of symmetrical balance if he has the extreme of having *only* faith or the other extreme of having *only* works. Jesus refers to this in Matthew 7:21-23. He tells some of those boasting of works only that *"I never knew you."*

Do you have the proper balance between *doctrine* and *practice*? Are you one kind of person on Sunday and a different person the rest of the week? Paul talks about man's sinful nature by saying that if sin is in you, you do not do the things that you want to do and you do the things that you do not want to do (Romans 7:15-19). Perhaps the motivation for having balance in your Christian living comes from a measure of both *love* and *fear*. Both emotions are tied to commandments. One area is seen in Ecclesiastes 12:13 where the Bible says, *"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."* Jesus gave the other emotional side when He said, *"If you love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). Do you have the awareness that God loves you and at the same time balance that with the awesome understanding that He will punish evil?

The third major element that must have a proper balance is in the process of having your sins remitted and of moving from a lost condition to a saved condition. Jesus explains this idea in Mark 16:16. He tells us that he who *believes* and is *baptized* will be saved. If we do not have both of these we are not balanced. We can be unbalanced if we only have belief and do not understand that baptism is a burial that leads to a new life (Romans 6:4). We can be equally out of balance if we emphasize baptism to the exclusion of belief.

In all of the above cases, it is necessary to have as much of something on one side as we have on the other side if we are to have perfect Christian symmetry. The Christian life must also have vertical elements that are directed toward God, and horizontal elements that are directed toward others. If you illustrate a vertical line bisecting a horizontal line, the result is a cross. I believe that one way to help us gain Christian symmetry is by thinking about the cross, more specifically, the death of Jesus on the cross. The awareness of His death for us should help us to have the desire and the incentive to live a symmetrically balanced Christian life. ✝

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A Meeting At The Rock Pile

Michael L. King

Upon the arrival of the Israelites at the Jordan River prior to making their grand entrance into the promised land, God gave instruction for one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to pass over the Jordan before the ark of the Lord. While in the midst of the Jordan each man was to gather a stone, place it on his shoulder, and deposit it along with the other eleven near their encampment at Gilgal. The significance of these stones was that when their descendants would ask about the pile of stones they could recall that their ancestors were delivered from Egyptian bondage, had the Red Sea opened for them, were provided for in the wilderness, and passed over the Jordan on dry ground to dwell in a land that flowed with milk and honey. The desired end for the monument and the retelling of the story was, *"that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God forever"* (Joshua 4:24).

The monument of rocks attested to God's greatness and mercy for generations to come, so that love, respect, appreciation, and worship to the God of Israel might be preserved for their posterity. What are we as church leaders, faithful Christians, parents, etc., leaving as a monument to the goodness of God toward self, country, family, or to the church? Will our extended family come to know God because of the high esteem we had for Him? Are we allowing God's goodness to flavor the lives of progeny yet unborn? Will our "rock pile" attest to our faith in, and dedication to, God for the working of His mighty hand in our lives, touching distant generations with an eternal impact?

In our passing this way, our "stones" of verification of love and appreciation could be: intensity of Bible study, earnestness of prayer, loyalty to the body of Christ, our having submitted to the cleansing of our soul in baptism, our commitment to leadership in God's cause, our confidence in handling reversals, sickness and death through faith.

Whatever your "stone" may be, it should be a mark of pleasure, happiness, victory, gratitude, and respect for the Almighty! This occasion for the Israelites was a positive and happy one, as should be the totality of the Christian's sojourn upon this earth.

There is another "rock pile" which denotes the opposite. It was a monument of warning, failure, and rejection in the midst of Israel. Achan had stolen spoils of war and had hidden them beneath his tent floor, becoming a curse to Israel. Their military prowess became tarnished, and failure pervaded God's

mighty nation of people. The great leader, Joshua, held hearings to determine the cause and responsible person, for he knew that there was *"sin in the camp."* When the determination was made as to Achan's guilt, he was reprimanded for having *"troubled us,"* and told that *"the Lord shall trouble thee this day"* (Joshua 7:25). This marked the beginning of the construction of yet another "rock pile!" *"And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, the valley of Achor* (trouble) *unto this day"* (Joshua 7:25,26).

Which of the two "rock piles" best describe our life? Does our life serve as a faith-builder for others through the honor and esteem we give to God for His goodness toward us, as well as toward mankind in general, showing that He is very much alive within our hearts and adored by us? Could it be said that our life is better depicted as an entombment where the many opportunities for serving and doing good to the glory of our great God have been laid to rest? When people pass by and gaze on the monument of our life, do they shake their heads in sadness, realizing "what could have been," or do they applaud the greatness of our God because of what they have seen in us? Dear friend, is your life's objective for it to be a tribute, not trouble; a gift, not a grave; and a monument of might, instead of a misuse of mercy? ✝

Michael L. King preaches for the Grant Street congregation in Decatur, Alabama, U. S. A.

The Comfort of Scripture

If you fear spiritual conflict and the fight is hard, read Psalm 27.

If you feel your lack of spiritual desires, read Romans 8.

If your love for others or for God is weak, read 1 Corinthians 13.

If you lack a knowledge of God's law, read Exodus 20; Matthew 22:34-40.

If you find it hard to forgive, or to seek forgiveness, read Psalm 32:51; Matthew 18.

If you do not have eternal life, read John 3:1-18.

If you desire a vision of heaven, read Revelation 21, 22.

If you are discouraged, read Isaiah 40.

If you are in doubt, or lack faith, read Hebrews 11, 12.

If you are weary of those who oppose you, read Psalm 37:1-7.

—Herbert Lockyer

The Christian Is To Be Different

Max Patterson

There was a time when our preachers and teachers taught forcefully that Christians were to be different from those in the world. Many passages were cited, including 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord . . . ."*

Today, there is an element, even in the church, that is saying, "We ought not to be different. We ought to mingle with people as they are, and not 'stand out' in our appearance or actions." I believe this is totally false and exactly opposite to all the Bible teaches. Consider the following:

✔ Our Language.

While the world takes the name of the Lord in vain, tells dirty and suggestive stories, and gossips and maligns, the Christian is to shun all of this and to use his tongue to glorify God and to edify people (Matthew 12:36,37; Romans 1:29,30; 1 Timothy 4:12).

✔ Where We Go.

While the world is at the beer joint, and the dance hall, and the gambling hall, and the harlot house (and that can be just about anywhere nowadays), the Christian is concerned about good morals and a good example (1 Timothy 4:12; 5:24; 6:11,12).

✔ How We Dress.

While the world sees how little it can wear, the Christian is con-

cerned about modesty at all times, and is aware of the Bible's emphasis upon lust and the shame of nakedness (1 Timothy 2:9,10; Revelation 3:18).

✔ Our View Of Sanctity Of Life.

While the world seeks abortions, in many instances to hide its sins, the Christian stands against murder, and for natural affection and the sacredness of life (2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Romans 13:9).

✔ Our Thinking.

While the world is filling its mind with trash — lust, adultery, fornication, uncleanness — the Christian is trying to think on that which is honorable, clean, and pure (Philippians 4:8).

✔ What Is Most Important.

While the world regards *self* as the most important, and that which is to be satisfied, the Christian is trying to seek *first* the Kingdom of Christ and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

✔ Our Homes.

While the world is attacking the home and bringing every imaginable pressure upon it to tear it down, Christians look upon it as a divine institution and a part of God's plan to meet the needs of man for his happiness (Matthew 19:1-9; Ephesians 5:23-28).

✔ Our Benevolence.

While the world thinks only of self, Christians are concerned about the needs of others (James 1:26,27).

✔ Our Worship.

While the world is lured and enamored by the gods of this world, Christians worship the true God (John 4:24; Matthew 4:8-11).

Need more be said to prove the point that Christians are to be different? Those Christians who teach that we ought to just fall in with the crowd (after all, we don't want to appear to be odd) betray their lack of depth, their shallowness of spirituality. There is not enough faith yet to keep them from being ashamed of this Christian life that calls for all who follow to be different. Paul expressed it well: *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"* (Romans 1:16).

Let us dare to be different! Let us dare to be that for which Jesus Christ died — that which He made it possible for us to be. ⇧

Max Patterson preaches for the Hillcrest church in Neosho, Missouri, U.S.A.

Reflections

Joe C. Magee

"God that made the world and all the things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring" (Acts 17:24-28).

There is an underlying danger that threatens the very well-being of our future and the future of following generations: the sensitivity of racial differences. Racial differences themselves are a fact of life that we cannot change. To be sensitive to this fact to the point of being insulted or defensive at the slightest mention of the differences is counter-productive to building a strong and healthy society.

Recently, on one of the many talk shows on television, the subject was the problems caused by racial mixtures. There were those who argued that if a person had one drop of black blood in his veins he should consider himself black, and proudly so. There were others who attempted to hide their bi-racial background and tried desperately to pass themselves off as being totally white. One young man showed more wisdom than all the others when he stated that who he was racially was of no importance to him compared to what he could become as an individual.

That this attitude of racial sensitivity is being maintained even in the church of our Lord is a painful and shameful reality which is not being addressed with the honesty and integrity becoming to Christianity. Brethren, when will we wake up to the fact that, while God made us all of different races, we are all His creation, subject to His laws, and recipients of His grace? Until we can look at an individual without being judicially aware of the color of his skin, the slant of his eyes, or the dialect of his speech, we are not seeing that person as God sees him. And when we take a defensive attitude because of our race, whatever it is, we do not see ourselves as God sees us.

If there is any area of thought where Christians should exemplify the mind of God, it is certainly in the area of racial sensitivity. Many, I fear, will stand before God searching for some feeble explanation to justify their error. ✝

Joe C. Magee preaches for the church of Christ in Berryville, Arkansas, U.S.A.

When I was a child, my mother made me wear big white socks that she had worn until they were too stretched out for her. They were so big I had to put rubber bands around the tops to hold them up. One day, on my way home from school, it started to rain and those socks got so wet that the rubber bands couldn't hold them up anymore. They sank down to my ankles in big messy clumps. The other kids started laughing at me, and I started crying.

Out of nowhere, a big umbrella covered me over, and a gentle arm fell across my shoulders. A soft voice comforted me, telling me that people had laughed at her before, and that I should not pay attention to them. She said it didn't matter what I wore or what other people thought of me because of the way I looked. *It only mattered who I was inside.* I let the warmth of her words and touch soak into my weary little body. Too shy to look up, all I saw were her dark legs at the top of her boots. On rainy days, I remember the kind black lady who took the time to love a little white kid with droopy socks and a broken heart.

— Jessie Granville

Slander

Royce Frederick

*"**Blessed** are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **Rejoice** and be **exceedingly glad**, for **great** is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you . . . But I say to you, **love** your enemies, **bless** those who curse you, **do good** to those who hate you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"* (Matthew 5:11,12,44).

Let us never slander others. Slander is the devil's tool (Revelation 12:10). It separates chief friends (Proverbs 16:28; 17:9), incurs God's wrath (Proverbs 6:19), and is labeled sinful in both Testaments (Exodus 23:1; Leviticus 19:16; Romans 1:29,30; James 4:11). We must put away slander (Ephesians 4:31) and *"speak evil of no one"* (Titus 3:2). We will give account for all of our words (Matthew 12:36). Let us not jump to hasty conclusions, nor say things we are not absolutely sure about.

Let us guide our tongues with care. Before we speak, we should ask ourselves: "Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it necessary?" We should use the Golden Rule in everything we speak: "Would I want others to speak this way about me?" *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets"* (Matthew 7:12). If our brother sins against us, let us first speak to him privately — to save him, not to shame him (Matthew 18:15-17).

Let us not listen to slander. Evil tales seek hungry ears. *"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases"* (Proverbs 26:20). We should not let a slanderer use our ears nor our tongue to spread slander: *"nor share in other people's sins"* but rather *"keep yourself pure"* (1 Timothy 5:22). Love defends brethren and believes the best about their behavior (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). *"Above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'"* (1 Peter 4:8).

Let us not be discouraged by slander. As long as we are trying to do right, the world will think we are strange and will speak evil of us (1 Peter 4:4; John 15:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:12). If someone slanders you, realize that you are in good company with **Job** (Job 1:9-11; 4:3), **Joseph** (Genesis 39:14-18), **Moses** (Numbers 16:3,13), **Jeremiah** (Jeremiah 18:18), **Jesus** (John 5:18; 8:48,52; 10:20), **Stephen** (Acts 6:11,13), and **Paul** (Romans 3:8; 2 Corinthians 6:8).

Let us love the slanderers, pray for them, **do good** for them, and **forgive** them (Matthew 5:44; 6:12-15; Romans 12:14,17-21; 1 Corinthians 4:12,13). They have souls, too. And remember that a great reward in heaven awaits us if we endure false accusations for the Lord's sake (Matthew 5:11,12; 1 Peter 4:14).

Let us live right so others will not believe the slander. We should *". . . **give no opportunity** to the adversary to speak reproachfully"* (1 Timothy 5:14). Be sure to keep *". . . a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your **good conduct** in Christ may be ashamed"* (1 Peter 3:16). *"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts** which war against the soul, having your conduct **honorable** among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your **good works** which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Peter 2:11,12). ✞

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Useful To Whom?

Jeril (Polly) Cline

The desire to be useful is universal. From the youngest child to the oldest octogenarian, life comes to hold meaning in direct proportion to one's usefulness. Because this is so, whether we are male or female, black, white, or in between, young or old, we seek ways to become more useful.

Our usefulness may come in the form of learning a new craft, running a marathon, watching our diet, or signing up for night classes. But whatever the outlet, each in some way contributes to the perception that we are bettering ourselves, making strides toward achieving something of value, becoming more useful . . . not only to ourselves, but also to others.

God knows we have this need. He bestowed it. And He alone knows how to fulfill it . . . fill it full. It is only right, then, that we ask Him: "How can I become more useful?"

He might respond with, "Do you **really** want to become useful . . . useful to **Me**?"

The sincere heart would surely answer, "Yes!"

Hear what He instructed Paul to write to Timothy, who must have asked a similar question.

> *"'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let every one who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.' Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man **cleanses** himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified**, **useful** to the Master, **prepared** for every good work"* (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

Usefulness to the Master is directly linked to purification. There is a part we must do. As Peter said, one must *" . . . abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul"* (1 Peter 2:11). I cannot do this for you. You cannot achieve it for me. It requires personal responsibility. James put it this way, *"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father . . . to keep oneself unstained by the world"* (James 1:27). This cleansing precedes profitability.

Purification of God's possession was at the heart of why Jesus came. It was the only route to restore our usefulness to God. It cost the Lord His very life. His part in purifying us of necessity had to precede our part in purifying ourselves for Him: *"who gave Himself for us, that He might **purify** for Himself a people for His own **possession**, zealous for good deeds"* (Titus 2:14).

Purification and possession go hand in hand as surely as purification and preparation (usefulness to the Master). They cannot be separated. God forever joined them.

The world is not going to advertise this method of becoming more useful, achieving greater fulfillment. To do so would be an admission that its method does not produce its promised end. It is, after all, more concerned with the outer man, while God's concern penetrates the surface to expose the heart. It is a life and death issue . . . His death for our life!

To become a vessel of honor, **useful** for the Master, there must first be a cleansing. Even under the old law nothing could be used in service to God before it had been cleansed. Exodus chapters 29 and 32, and Leviticus 14, 16, and 18 describe how the altar, sacrifices, tent, food, garments, incense, oil, and finally God's own priests had to be cleansed, consecrated, set apart, sanctified, made holy.

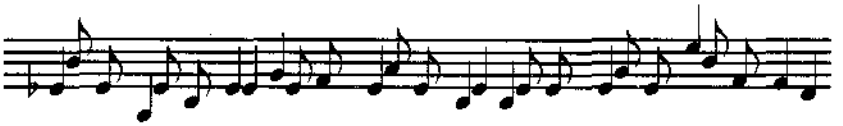
"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Here we are not only told that we who are under the new covenant belong to Him, but what useful work He has for us: To proclaim, declare, make plain to the world the great work He has done. This sounds similar to what Jesus told the demon-possessed man who haunted the tombs of the Gerasenes. After Jesus had cast the man's legion of devils into 2,000 swine, the man requested to follow Jesus. But he was told, *"Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you"* (Mark 5:19).

Here was our predicament — we were filthy, unholy, alien, without God and without power to cleanse ourselves (Ephesians 2:12; Romans 5:6-11). But God knew that and provided all we needed: *"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve* (become useful to) *the living God?"* (Hebrews 9:14).

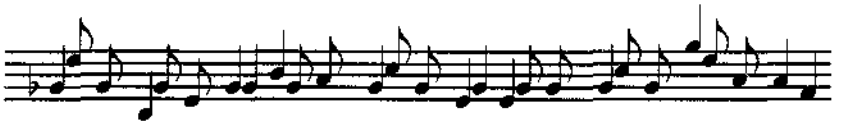
The power of the Godhead — all three at work for me — that I might in turn work for Him, to His glory! A vessel of honor, sanctified, **useful to the Master!** He died to clean me up. He ever lives to maintain my holiness (Titus 2:14; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 1:7,9).

Now, how useful am I? How useful do I **really** want to be? Am I trying to become more useful by using the world's way, or God's? ⇧

Jerli (Polly) Cline is the wife of Danny Cline, a gospel preacher, and they work with the church in Blue Ridge, Georgia, U.S.A.



What a Time for a Song



Shan Jackson

What a time for a song! *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them"* (Acts 16:25). At midnight in a Roman dungeon, their feet fast in stocks, their bodies racked with pain from having had *". . . many stripes laid upon them . . ."* (verse 23), these Christian soldiers showed the faith they had in a loving Father. Their mission now on hold, not knowing what the day's dawn might bring, they are found with prayers on their lips and songs in their hearts, *". . . and the prisoners heard them."*

It is not surprising to find these suffering ones deeply engaged in prayer. Many times, when all else seems hopeless, our final thoughts are thoughts of prayer. But Paul and Silas were not agonizing through their final thoughts. Their hearts were still filled with *". . . joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8). The wonder is that they not only prayed, but they also sang praises to God.

In life, sooner or later, we all come to a midnight hour. The hour comes when all is dark, when myriad shapes seem to haunt our path, when the very darkness appalls, when our hearts cry out. We fear the dark as well as what the day might bring. In agony we pray. But do we have the faith to sing?

The secret of their singing is made plain to us. It is because they knew whom they had believed and were persuaded that he was able to keep that which they had committed unto him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12). ✞

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Not Slothful In Business

Darrell Ramsey

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11). Paul was here giving some general advice to help the Christians to live in such a manner that would bring honor to Christ. As Christians, we are to be an example to the world — *"a city set on a hill."* It is very important that our daily conduct be above reproach.

In the business world it is important that Christians deal honestly, accept no bribes or kickbacks, be truthful on their income tax returns, give an honest day's work to their employers, etc. A true Christian will never be slothful in business. The Christian does not do right in order to be honest, but because he is honest!

One Bible version words the command this way: *"With unflagging energy, in ardor of spirit, serve the Lord."* In everyday language, don't be lazy. A lazy employee defrauds his employer; lazy parents neglect the discipline of their children; the lazy landlord neglects the upkeep of his property. In fact, lazy people do not make good Christians, but tell the world they are bored with life, have no zeal, and simply don't care.

Lazy people cause others to work harder, since a certain amount of work must be done by someone. No team needs a lazy member.

"Serve the Lord with unflagging energy." This speaks directly to those unwilling to accept responsibility. We often see this in the congregations of the church. Perhaps there is a talented teacher who refuses to teach because of the effort and time involved. It is always easier to turn down a job than to prepare for it. Laziness is disgusting when we see it in others, but are we sometimes equally guilty?

Laziness is incompatible with the spirit of Christ. Peter said that Jesus left us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21), and can you imagine Christ being slothful at any time, for any reason? On one occasion He said, *"I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work"* (John 9:4). He also said, *"My Father worketh hitherto and I work"* (John 5:17).

There are several characteristics that brand people as lazy, or slothful. They are often irregular in attendance, interest, and giving. Some have called these folks "Sanka" Christians — the active ingredients have been removed! They are rarely interested in soul-saving, since it requires too much energy to tell their neighbors about the Christ. They spend very little time in study of God's Word. They do not bother with prayer, except during a crisis, and in general commit sins of omission. Unfortunately, many judge the whole church by the lazy member.

One outstanding characteristic of slothful Christians is the habit of being late to worship services. Their late entrance often disturbs other worshippers. These same people would not even think of missing the opening kickoff at a football game, or missing the first pitch at a baseball game.

A lazy religion is a dead religion. *"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"* (James 2:14,17). Every talent, every opportunity, carries with it responsibility. *"For unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more"* (Luke 12:48). The Bible warns that those who know to do good and do nothing will be sent into everlasting punishment.

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). This takes for granted that anything done for the Lord will be done heartily. ✞

Darrell Ramsey is the retired husband of staff worker Eulene Ramsey, and they live in Winona, Mississippi, U.S.A.

Betty Tucker

I remember a Chinese brother who ended his prayer in public worship with these simple words, "We lay it all in your hands." I think that surely God is pleased with such a prayer.

It indicates that we acknowledge God as our Master, the Ruler of the universe. He is powerful enough to keep the stars in orbit and this world running perfectly down through the ages (Job 26:7).

Surely He can so direct our small affairs that eventually *". . . all things work together for* (our) *good . . ."* (Romans 8:28). Why, then, do we spend so much time agonizing over trials of this life?

Special Times To Leave It All To God

(1) When friends let us down or even betray us, we must remember that we have a friend who never forsakes us (1 Samuel 12:22).

(2) When we are plagued by the ever-present lack of sufficient money to meet our needs, we can look to God to provide. If He clothes the lilies of the fields (Luke 12:27,28), He will provide for His children whatever we really need.

(3) When life becomes hectic and stressful situations surround us, we need to take time to *"Be still, and know that I am* (He is) *God"* (Psalm 46:10).

(4) When we face serious illness, or even death, we must look with confidence toward heaven, and trust the One who created us to lead us through the Valley of Shadows (Psalm 23).

The prophet Jeremiah records a promise from our heavenly Father which is still good today. *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest"* (Jeremiah 33:3).

Read again 1 Peter 3:12. Perhaps we somehow miss the second state-

ment found in this verse — *" . . . His ears are open unto their prayers . . ."* Isn't it a comfort to know that God listens to the prayers of the righteous?

A similar promise made by God to His people is found in Isaiah 65:24. How the old prophet's heart must have thrilled when he heard the words, *" . . . before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."* God knows what His people want and need. He begins to answer, even before we are finished with our prayer.

How Does God Answer?

Sometimes, God says "yes" to our requests. Solomon asked for wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:10). God granted his request and heaped upon him *"riches and wealth and honor"* never before nor since equalled.

God sometimes answers a firm "no" to our supplications. Paul was a holy and devout believer. He prayed three times for God to remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7,8). When God said "No," we marvel at the attitude of this kindly old soldier of the cross. In verses 9 and 10, we hear him say (paraphrasing), "If I grow stronger because of this weakness, then give me more thorns that I may grow stronger still." When did you pray for more trials and tribulations, that your faith might be proven?

Then, there are times when God says, "Wait." The first example that usually comes to mind is Moses. He wanted to lead the people out of Egypt when he was young. Through God's providence, Moses was forced to flee to the mountains. There he lived the lonely life of a shepherd, tending his sheep. God knew that Moses needed a time of aging, growing, and learning. One day God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. The time was right for the old shepherd to lead the people away from Pharoah's captivity. Moses had waited 40 years, and now he was ready!

In the Bible we learn much about prayer. We are admonished in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to *"pray without ceasing."* It is a blessed and wonderful thing to be permitted to approach the throne of God whenever we wish.

No doubt you can cite many instances of answered prayer in your own life. Nothing is too large or too small for us to pray about. James tells us that *"ye have not because ye ask not"* (James 4:2).

This may seem to be a simplistic approach to solving problems in this busy 20th century. But, if we can learn from our Chinese brother to pray earnestly to God to supply our needs and then **lay it in His hand**, we will find burdens lifted and hurts relieved. ✞

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Eli's Sons

Owen Cosgrove

The fourteenth judge of Israel, Eli, was a great national leader, but his sons were unspeakably immoral and vile. 1 Samuel 2:22-36 tells of their utter contempt for God's ways and of the curse that a righteous God put upon them and their descendants.

Finally God told Samuel, *"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them"* (1 Samuel 3:13).

When I was twenty-two years old, a congregation invited me to teach a whole series of lectures on young people and how to raise them. My vast knowledge of the subject at that time has shown a steady decline for over thirty years.

But I am going to tell you something, parents, and I believe the Lord's Word will back it up. You had better teach your children to mind, or they are going to have a hard life. You had better start early and be kind and fair, but be consistent in teaching them what **"No"** means.

Many parents are afraid of their children. They are afraid that if they tell them "no" the children won't like them and won't be happy and won't forgive them.

But children who are pampered and unrestrained are the most insecure of all. Some children have never been taught consistently to sit down, to be quiet, to leave other people's things alone, and to obey the rules. Indulging parents let them go wild, and they dare anybody else to try to control them, and you can be sure that they are headed for **big trouble.**

The writer of Hebrews speaks of our honor for parents who loved us enough to discipline us (Hebrews 12:4-13). My favorite teachers in school were the ones who made us behave ourselves and learn something. They were not trying to be our playmates and pals. They were trying to teach us how to behave ourselves and how to live.

Some children seize control within weeks or months of birth, and mommy and daddy are afraid to head them off. The tragic results finally bring heartaches to all, and the words return to haunt us: **"His sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them."** ✝

Owen Cosgrove is a preacher and writer living in Waxahachie, Texas, U. S. A.

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN . . .

In the Hospitality of Her Home

Betty Burton Choate

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2). Throughout history, hospitality has been counted a quality of honor and selflessness.

One day three men were passing by Abraham's tent. He ran to meet them and begged them to turn aside and rest under the shade of his tree. He then urged Sarah to hurry and prepare bread for them. He himself ran to the herd and selected a tender calf which he gave to a servant to be dressed and cooked. Taking butter and milk, he set the meal before his visitors and stood by them under the tree while they ate (Genesis 18).

On that momentous day Abraham was host to the Lord (Genesis 18:13) and to two angels (19:1), in the appearance of men. The Hebrew writer in the New Testament urged Christians to have the same hospitable heart which Abraham and Sarah showed on that day so long ago.

On another occasion the prophet of God, Elisha, *"went to Shunem where there was a notable [great] woman, and she constrained him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, that he turned in there to eat*

some food."

"And she said to her husband, 'Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. Please let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there'" (2 Kings 4:8-10). The work was done and whenever Elisha and his servant, Gehazi, passed that way they turned aside to rest in the upper room.

Elisha's life as a prophet was not easy. The Shunammite lady had noticed that his physical needs were not being supplied. She probably knew, too, that at times his very life was in danger from the Baal priests in the land and from political enemies of Israel, such as is recorded in 2 Kings 6:1-23 where the king of Syria planned to kill Elisha.

But the kindly heart of the Shunammite lady was moved to ease Elisha's hardship. We see her hospitality in preparing food for him to eat when he passed that way, and then in going to all the expense to make a room and to furnish it for his comfort.

This Shunammite lady was not only godly and hospitable but, by inspiration of God, the writer of the book of Kings called her 'notable' or 'great'. What a tribute those words were! They describe a person with qualities we should develop in our own lives as women in God's family today.

What else do we learn about the Shunammite lady? That she was modest. When Elisha sent for her to ask what he could do in return for her great kindness, she did not presume to enter into the privacy of his room. 2 Kings 4:15 says, "When he called her, she stood in the doorway." What modesty and wisdom we see in her character!

We also see great trust in God and in Elisha's power as the man of God. True to Elisha's prophecy, she had a son (2 Kings 4:17) but in the process of time he suddenly became sick and died. What did the Shunammite woman do? Was she wailing and mourning over her tragedy? No. Even when her husband asked why she was making an unexpected trip to see the man of God, she simply answered him, *"It is well"* (2 Kings 4:23). She was a woman of great faith.

Among Christian women today, the power of a godly life can influence all of those around us. If others see in us the qualities of greatness, hospitality, selflessness, modesty, and faith, they will be drawn to God's way. ✝

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

Growing Up Without God

Charles E. Cobb

It is not our purpose in this article to offer up a big heap of statistics, although this could be profitable. Suffice it for our purpose to suggest to the reader that you probably know someone who has or who is growing up without God.

Respect for and reverence toward God is a tremendously stabilizing force in our world. What a shame, what a tragedy, that many children who roam the streets, smoke pot, drink alcoholic beverages, carry weapons — knives, guns, and such like — know little or nothing of God. Their home life (?) is a shambles. They live in poverty. They see the rich and well-to-do and covet what they have. They learn about sex and practice it before they even begin to think (if they ever do) of responsibility. They often attend school by coercion. They are subjected to "sex-education" courses in which they learn how to have "safe sex," but are taught nothing about morality, God, and restraint.

School halls are filled with profanity, lewd talk, sometimes violence, stealing, deceit, and scurrilous gossip and slander. The children are growing up without God.

Educational institutions, government agencies, numerous homes, social circles, and gangs have outlawed God. Children are involved in and growing up in such surroundings — without God.

If our children continue to grow up without God, law and order will become to them a bigger joke. Criminals will rule society. Lawlessness will be crowned king. Christians will be persecuted, even unto death, as were the apostles and early disciples. And, hell will enlarge its borders.

Surely, the finest thing we can ever do for our growing children is not to provide them with expensive clothes, cars, motorbikes, boats, and such luxury items, but to introduce them to God and teach them the Bible. Children need to grow up straight and have hope for eternity.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). ✝

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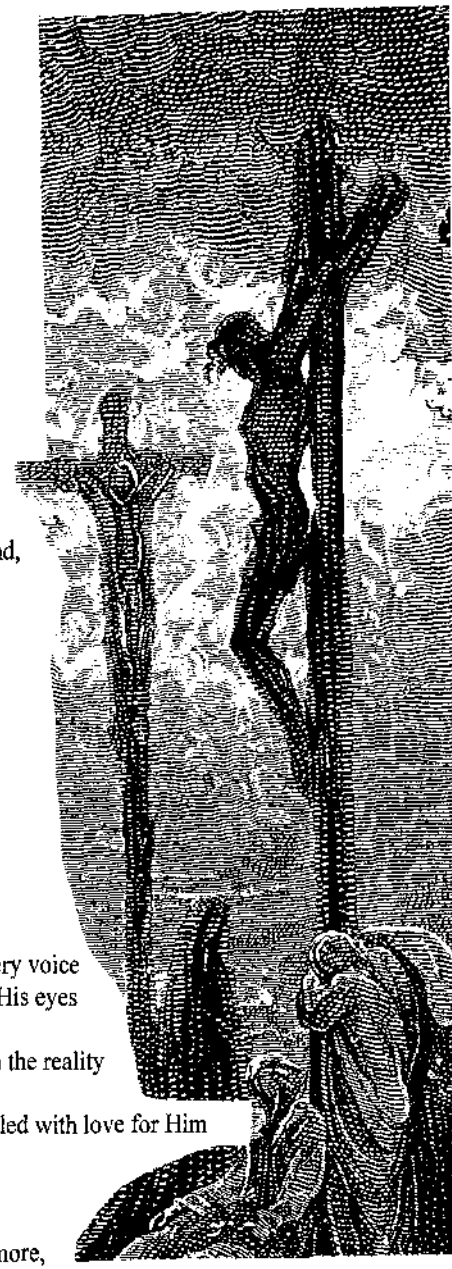
I Ask

The world is filled with people
— billions of us —
And all of us have beliefs
in *some* god
and *some* worship
and *some* behavior of life,
in preparation for death.
Out of the billions,
What a thought it is
— *astounding, wondrous* —
That *I* should be among the few
Who know Him *as He is,*
That I can see Him
Through two thousand years of history:
He is the King of hosts,
The Lord of lords at God's right hand,
Ruler in heaven
And Ruler on the earth.
"Glory, glory, glory —"
No words are adequate
To describe our Lord . . . . .



I think of Him, too,
When He walked Judean hills
And taught of God,
And I think how thrilled
I would have been
If He had said, "Follow Me."
And if *I* could have heard His very voice
And if *I* could have looked into His eyes
And seen His soul,
And if *I* could have marvelled in the reality
Of *God — here* — with *us,*
And if *my* heart could have swelled with love for Him
When He was tired
Or hurt by unbelief
Or when He answered so well
That His enemies dared ask no more,

Or when He reached out to us,
Reassuring our half-grown faith.

But often
Those closest to great-souled men
Don't grasp their greatness
And maybe, with Him,
His tiredness and sweat,
His *humanness*
Clothed in all that was ordinary
Of His own world,
His being — or *seeming* to be —
One among us
Would have clouded my eyes
So that
Though He claimed "One come from God"
Sometimes, *away from Him,*
Is it *possible*
That I might have *doubted,*
Afraid that, cunningly,
Like "false Christs" gone before Him
He worked for power and for fame
And made me look a fool?

And when
— though He'd made me think He'd be a king
over us, at least,
and maybe over all the world —
When, instead, they took Him,
Charged with treason,
And they tried Him
And He said no brilliant words
To leave them speechless,
And He worked no wonder
As proof He'd come from God,
Would I have questioned
If, *maybe,* it was only when things were well,
When *friends* were gathered round,
That He could say "good sounding" words
And fool us with a "wonder",

But
— if He had *real* power —
The trial was the time to prove it
And He *didn't*
— surely He *couldn't* —
And at the last the claims seemed lies,
So that, like any thief
Or common man
Caught in a crime
He couldn't help Himself
And would *I* have stood there in the crowd,
Befuddled,
Faith turned upside down
Resentment growing in my heart
For being fooled?

They brought Him out
— He'd *claimed* the blood of kings
ran in His veins —
And that "royal" blood
Streamed from the whip cuts
And from the "crown" thorns,
And He seemed beaten
Not only in body
But in spirit
And in words,
And they asked us,
"What will you do with Jesus?"
And those of us
Who were proud they'd *never* believed
And those of us
Who were ashamed we'd *almost* believed
Shouted in growing crescendo,
"Crucify Him . . .
Crucify Him . . . !"

I ask in fear . . . . . *Would I*
have been among that screaming mob?

— Betty Burton Choate

Beautiful Feet

Romans 10:15

Richard E. Trull, Jr.

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things."

I looked up the hill from the bottom of the dusty path that I had just come down. There was a line of people threading their way down the path that wound through the bushes to the river below. The bushes were covered with the dust stirred up by the movement of so many feet. There were men, women, and a crew of children. This day would be special for many of the parents of a number of those children and for many of those children.

These Christians were members of the Andula church which had been begun in 1983. Since arriving in Kenya, I had worked with that congregation. The Andula church has been independent for a number of years. They carry on their own worship without our help. I visit there on occasions and hold courses for the leaders from that congregation and others nearby. The leaders from there have started a couple of churches in villages near them.

On this particular day I reflected back to my first year in Kenya. I spent many days with the young Christians at that church. I came to know that village and worked with the Christians in teaching the Gospel. I remembered that in 1984 to 1985 we brought food relief to that village when the drought resulted in famine. Visions still live in my memory of Christians who were healthy one month and then the next seemed to have lost an unimaginable amount of weight in that short period of time. I also remember the dying people being carried on litters up the road to the nearby hospital.

In 1984 the Andula church had many young couples with little toddlers. Over the years those young children have grown. They have not only grown physically but in a spiritual atmosphere as well. They were raised by parents who chose to live the Christian life and who also wanted to teach their children about Jesus, the Savior. The children attended Sunday school each week and were taught about Jesus — a blessing beyond measure.

Now I stood in the center of a swiftly flowing stream and watched as over a dozen of those barefoot children came down the dirt path and entered the stream to be baptized into the Lord Jesus. I stood amazed at the power of God to transform the lives of people and their children.

The parents of those children were lined on both sides of the river bank. At my eye level were their beautiful feet. Those feet brought their children to the living God, and that day we all watched with joy as their children were raised from the water to a new life in Christ. Truly, those were beautiful feet. ✝

Richard E. Trull, Jr. is a missionary in Meru, Kenya.

Beginnings

Emerging from the new birth
By water and the Spirit
One becomes a new creature
With heart facing toward Christ.
Brightness of His Light illuminates
And love envelops the soul.
An impulse to help others to the Perfect Way
Inspires a sharing of His Word.
Pastures become green and Living Waters
Gush forth in pure streams around.
The Loving Shepherd spreads His arms
Enfolding His own to guide and protect.
The Highway of Light leads on and on
To higher ground,
And in the end,
A bright beginning in a New Eternal World.

— Ima Keeling Huff

Evangelism Is Not An Option!

Rod Kyle

Jesus commanded His apostles to go and teach the Good News in all the world. That command was formulated as a promise in Acts 1:8. But does it apply to us? Is it an option?

There is no explicit statement in the Scriptures that commands YOU to go and teach about Christ. By implication (Matthew 28:20), though, and approved example (Acts 8:4) we are included. Who would dispute this?

Also, who would dispute that it is sometimes a "hard-to-carry-out-command?" It might help us if we realized a few things about our GO command.

The apostles struggled with it, too. They were some seventeen years in Jerusalem before they began going into all the world. They were first trained by Jesus Himself (Luke 6:40; John 15:27) before He launched them into the world.

It is indeed a daunting task. There are more than 5.5 billion people in this world. Setting aside the billion or so safe children, how many left would go to heaven if Jesus were to come now? Tragically, not many.

What are our resources to help us teach others? Hebrews 13:5,6 declares that the Lord is our helper! Isaiah 55:11 promises us that God's Word will always gain results. Acting in faith, numerous brethren have discovered these marvelous words to be true. I know of many Christians who have contacted,

shared with, and witnessed the conversion of dozens of souls here in New Zealand. God will cause the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6) if we will do the work. But more of us must also discover these truths. We have the time, resources, and opportunities. Do we have the will?

We must not say in our hearts or our heads — "I'm too busy," or that "soul-winners' methods don't work," or "there are no good soil prospects here." Such rationalizations only serve to justify our own sinful, soul-damning inactivity.

The early disciples allowed God to work through them. When Paul arrived in Rome around 60 A.D., the church had been long established (Acts 28:15). The number of "Christian" tombs in the catacombs of Rome dating 33 to 300 A.D. allows us to calculate a population of around 400,000 Christians per generation. If this is true, that is success. Can it happen now?

It can if we will work the Master's plan, if we train ourselves in His methodology, if we courageously and lovingly speak specifically with our lost friends, if we keep ourselves motivated, if we rely upon Him and abide in Him (John 15:3,4). We will bear the fruit of lost souls won to the Son! There is no option in the great command. ✞

Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel of Christ in New Zealand.

The Importance of Visitors

Visitors are the most important people in the meetings of the church.

Visitors are not dependent on us; we are dependent upon our visitors because members are first visitors.

Visitors are not an interruption to our fellowship, but make fellowship sweeter and more purposeful.

Visitors do us a favor when they come in. We are not doing them a favor by serving them.

Visitors are not just statistics. They are flesh and blood human beings with feelings and emotions like ours.

Visitors are people who come to us with needs and wants. It is our job to meet them.

Visitors are deserving of the most courteous and attentive treatment we can give them.

Visitors are the life blood of this and every other church.

Without them, we would have to close our doors. Don't ever forget it. Jesus came for all people.

Make an effort to give all our **visitors** a royal welcome!

–Borrowed

Verse Search

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

1. _____, with his sisters, _____ and _____, lived in _____. (V. 1)

2. Which Mary was this? (V. 2)

3. When he received word of Lazarus' illness, what did Jesus say and do? (V. 4,6)

4. What do the Scriptures say Jesus felt for this family? (V. 5)

5. Why were the disciples afraid to go to the Jerusalem area? (V. 8)

6. When Martha ran to meet Jesus, what did she say?" (V. 21)

7. What assurance did Jesus give her? (V. 25,26)

8. What answer did Martha make? (V. 27)

9. What did Jesus do when He saw Mary and the Jews weeping? (V. 33,35)

10. The Jews asked, "_____ ____ ____ ____, who _____ ____ _____ ____ ___ _____, also have kept this man from _____?" (V. 37)

11. What did Jesus say when He came, groaning, to the tomb? (V. 39)

12. What objection did Martha make? (V. 39)

13. In Jesus' prayer He stated the reason for doing this miracle. What was the reason? (V. 42)

14. What happened when Jesus had prayed and cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" (V. 43,44)

15. "And many of the _____ who had come to Mary, and ____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____, _____ ____ _____." (V. 45)

16. What effect did this miracle have on the Pharisees and leaders in Jerusalem? (V. 46-50)

17. Did the leaders realize that Jesus had truly performed miracles? (V. 47)

18. From that day, what did they plot?? (V. 53,57)

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

Gifts Are Sometimes Conditional

G. F. Raines

The Book of God says that God *". . . gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers . . ."* (Joshua 21:43-45; see also Nehemiah 9:7,8); but they had to take possession of it (Deuteronomy 1:8) through much tribulation.

God said to Joshua, *". . . See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour . . ."* (Joshua 6:2); but the Hebrews were not permitted to actually take the city until *". . . the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days"* (Hebrews 11:30).

Our daily bread is a gift from God (Matthew 6:11); but Paul said to the Thessalonians, *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Salvation is also a gift from God (Romans 6:23), but only those who fear God and work righteousness are accepted with him (Acts 10:34,35).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the mighty Sermon on the Mount, clearly and unequivocally declared that *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4), who, in the infinitely perfect plan of God for man's redemption, in fulfillment of His eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:8-11), *"became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Hebrews 5:8,9).

For specific information concerning what one must do in order to be saved, please read Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:36-47; 8:26-40; 22:1-16; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 6:1-5; Galatians 3:26-29; 2 Peter 1:5-11. ✝

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On Going To Heaven

Maxie B. Boren

A person can go to heaven without being famous. And without being rich. And without being high on the social ladder. And without physical prowess or beauty. And without a lot of other things that folks seem to deem so important.

But NO ONE can go to heaven without Jesus Christ! *". . . in none other is there salvation"* (Acts 4:12). He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). Again, *"I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved . . ."* (John 10:9).

Even before His birth, an angel said of Him, *". . . it is he that shall save his people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). This was the very reason Jesus came into this world — to save the lost! He declared, *"I am come to seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10).

God laid upon Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, the sins of the world, and *"made him to be sin for us,"* that we might be saved! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. This He did that He *"might redeem us from all iniquity"* (Titus 2:14) and *"deliver us out of this present evil world"* (Galatians 1:4). He *"put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"* (Hebrews 9:26). No wonder the apostle Paul wrote, *"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . ."* (1 Timothy 1:15).

And we anxiously await the return of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, from the portals of heavenly glory (Philippians 3:20), that He might receive us unto Himself, so that where He is, there we *"may be also"* (John 14:3). ✝

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Peter Walking on Water

O.P. Baird

Matthew 14:1-36

Throughout His years of ministry, the power of God was seen working in Jesus. Two such occasions are recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Matthew. According to that account, a large crowd of people, five thousand men besides women and children, came to Jesus and He taught them (verses 13,14) and healed their sick (Mark 6:34). Late in the day Jesus fed all of those people by multiplying five loaves and two fish (verses 15-21). After He had fed them He *"made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away."* Then Jesus went up on a mountain alone to pray (verses 22,23).

This miracle so impressed the people that they wanted to take Jesus by force to make Him king (John 6:15). It should impress us with the power of Jesus and His concern for the needs of the people. He is able to supply our needs and, by His word, He feeds us with the necessary food for our spiritual health and growth.

While the disciples were crossing the sea, a strong wind arose and their boat was being tossed by the waves. *"Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.'"* Immediately Peter asked Jesus to let him come to Him walking on the water. Jesus replied, "Come" (verses 25-29). Of course Peter could not have walked on water by his natural power, but his faith in Jesus was so strong that he believed He could give him power to do even that.

Jesus said to Peter, *"Come."* His invitation to come to Him is extended to all who will listen. His

invitation is, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30). To those who respond to that invitation, Jesus gives the power to walk with Him.

In response to the command of Jesus, in this instance Peter sprang from the boat to the surface of the water and actually began to walk toward his Lord. With Jesus before him and the power of God beneath him, Peter's faith should have increased at every step; but he moved his eyes from Jesus to the threatening waves. He became afraid and began to sink. In the world there are many things to entice us and threaten us, but we must keep our hearts fixed on Jesus and put out of mind the things that would distract us.

When Peter began to sink, he cried out to Jesus, *"Lord, save me!"* (verse 30). Immediately Jesus reached out and caught him. Then came the gentle rebuke, *"Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* (verse 31). In the anxieties of life, do we sometimes need that rebuke? It was Peter who later wrote, *". . . casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7). If Peter had kept looking at the waves he would have sunk beneath them, but he knew to whom he should turn. Jesus is ready to lift us up and strengthen our faith.

Likely it was with much embarrassment that Peter got back into the boat after so boldly starting out and failing. But, to his credit, he acted upon the faith he had, and Jesus honored his faith and gave him victory. We are imperfect, just as Peter was imperfect, and Christ will lift us up when we begin to sink if we turn to Him. When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, immediately they were at the shore (John 6:21). If we keep our eyes on Christ and follow Him in faith He will bring us safely through the storms of life to the calm harbor of that better land. ✞

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

He who makes God first will find God with him at the last.

An Unbelievable God

David Deffenbaugh

Isaiah 1:1-20

The outlook is bleak. The picture that is painted is dark and full of despair. How could things be any worse?

The opening of the book of Isaiah is not encouraging. God describes His people as sons whom He has reared, but they have now rebelled against Him (verse 2). He complains that even the ox and the donkey know their master, but His own people do not know Him (verse 3). Further He says, *"Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have turned away from Him"* (verse 4). He even describes them as a body that is sick and diseased *"from the sole of the foot even to the head."* He doesn't try to hide their condition, they are full of *"bruises, welts, and raw wounds"* (verses 5, 6).

Wow! What a picture! The Lord just didn't see much good in His people at this time. It wasn't that they weren't religious. Later in this same chapter He describes their coming to Him in assemblies with sacrifices, offerings, incense, and prayers. However, because of their sinfulness, God says He has *"had enough"* of their worship, He *"take(s) no pleasure in"* it, He cannot endure, He is weary, He hates it. *"I will hide my eyes from you, . . . I will not listen"* (verses 10-15). Can you imagine?

Now comes the truly amazing part. Instead of obliterating such a wicked people from off the face of the earth, God makes them an offer. He says, *"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight"* (verse 16). After listing a few of the things they need to change, God then says, *"Come now, and let us reason together, Says the Lord, Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool"* (verse 18). Absolutely unbelievable!

God truly is believable. His mercy, compassion, and lovingkindness are beyond human comprehension. God holds out hope for the

vilest of sinners, even one so sinful as to be described as being a raw, diseased wound from the sole of his foot to the top of his head.

What God told Israel through Isaiah is still true today. In order to enjoy God's unbelievable love, we must *"consent and obey"* (verse 19). If not, our refusal will be regarded as rebellion (verse 20). *"He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation"* (Hebrews 5:9). Considering our sins and those of the world, isn't it good to know we have an unbelievable God? ✝

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

"LEARN TO DO GOOD; SEEK JUSTICE, REPROVE THE RUTHLESS; DEFEND THE ORPHAN, PLEAD FOR THE WIDOW" (ISAIAH 1:9).

Traveling on My Knees

Last night I took a journey
To a land across the seas.
I didn't go by boat or plane,
I traveled on my knees.

I saw so many people there,
In darkest depths of sin.
The Lord Jesus told me I should go,
Those many souls to win.

But I said, *"Lord Jesus, I can't go*
And work with such as these."
He answered quickly, *"Yes, you can,*
By traveling on your knees."

Said He, *"You pray, I'll meet the need;*
You call, and I will hear.
Be anxious over all lost souls,
Of those both far and near."

And I tried it; knelt in prayer,
And gave up some hours of ease.
I felt the Lord right by my side
While traveling on my knees.

As I prayed on and saw men saved,
And blighted spirits healed,
I saw God's workers' strength renewed
While laboring in the field.

Said I, *"Yes, Lord, I have a job,*
'Tis thee I'll ever please.
I'll gladly go and heed thy call
By traveling on my knees."

—Raymond Jackson

For the Joy of It

Bill McFarland

Hebrews 12:2

The Hebrews writer advised his readers to always be *"looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:2).

Notice that phrase, "for the joy that was set before him." It suggests the sustaining power of joy. Jesus endured the hostility of sinners and the humiliation of the death of the cross for the sake of the joy that was set before Him. One who is motivated by joy finds the strength to do mighty things.

But what is meant by *"the joy that was set before him"*? The writer seems to be referring to the Lord's being the author and the finisher of the faith by which we may come to God, and to His sitting down at the right hand of God, having completed His work. Jesus had come to do His Father's will (John 6:38), and to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The accomplishing of these purposes was to Him *"joy unspeakable and full of glory."*

What if we today would act *"for the joy set before us"* in a similar way? What if doing of our Father's will and helping people to come to Him was real joy to us? What if worshipping our wonderful God and serving our fellow man were things we did for the joy of it?

I suspect that we would find the strength to accomplish more than we ever thought possible. We would be able to endure until the victory is won.

Perhaps the church today needs to do fewer things for the pleasure of it and more things for the joy of it. We need hearts which find joy where Jesus did. ✝

Bill McFarland is the preacher for the National & High Church of Christ in Springfield, Missouri, U. S. A.

"Did you behave during worship?" asked Junior's mother.

"I sure did," Junior answered. "I heard the lady sitting behind me say, 'I never saw a child behave like that before in all my life.'"

The children were in the midst of a free-for-all.

"Richard, who started this?" asked the father.

"Well, it all started when Bobby hit me back."

An old lady won a million-dollar sweepstake, but since her family feared the excitement might kill her, they asked her preacher to break the good news to her. The preacher began by asking her what she would do if she won a million dollars. The old woman replied, "I'd give you and the church half of it." At that, the preacher fell dead.

Three boys were bragging one day about their fathers.

The first boy said, "My dad writes a couple of lines, calls it a poem, and gets $50.00 for it."

The second boy said, "My dad makes dots on paper, calls it a song, and gets $100.00 for it."

The third boy said, "That's nothing. My dad writes a sermon on a sheet of paper, gets up in the pulpit and reads it, and it takes four men to bring the money in!"

You may not have heard about the five-year-old boy who discovered that the chocolate milk carton was almost empty. "Mom, I'll have to drink this by myself because there isn't enough for Sarah, too," he said. Overhearing, Dad said sternly, "Tommy, if Jesus were here, what would **He** do?" Quick as a flash, three-year-old Christine answered, "He'd make more chocolate milk."

Woman using the phone at the auto mechanic's shop:

"He hasn't told me what it will cost, Harold, but he keeps whistling 'Happy Days Are Here Again.'"

A rich banker died and his family met in the attorney's office for the reading of the Will. The banker left half a million dollars to his wife, $50,000 each to his brothers and sisters, etc. The Will went on to read, " . . . and to my nephew Ralph, who always wanted to be mentioned in my Will, I say, 'Hello, Ralph.'"

The preacher hesitated before he entered the house.

"You're quite sure that your wife knows you're bringing me home to dinner?" he inquired cautiously.

"Knows it? Well, I should hope!" declared his host vigorously. "Why, man, I argued with her for almost an hour about it this morning!"

Sister Smith asked her husband, "Did you notice that extravagant-looking dress Sister Jones had on this morning?"

Brother Smith replied, "I'm afraid not. I must confess I was almost asleep."

His wife then answered, "Well, a lot of good the services did you!"

The boy, proposing to the girl, said to her, "Darling, I am not wealthy, and I don't have a yacht and a convertible like Jimmy Green, but, Sweetheart, I love you and want to marry you."

The girl thought for a moment and then replied, "And I love you, too, but tell me a little more about Jimmy Green."

Just as a man and his wife arrived at the boarding gate they saw their plane take off. He was extremely upset about having missed the plane. He complained, "If you weren't so slow in getting yourself dressed we wouldn't have missed it."

She said, "And if you hadn't rushed me so, we wouldn't have so long to wait for the next flight."

A deacon was watching passengers as they got off the plane, trying to pick out the visiting preacher whom he had never seen before.

Selecting a likely-looking fellow, he asked, "Pardon me, but are you a preacher?"

"No," came the curt reply. "It's my indigestion that makes me look like this." ✝

Esther

Frank Chesser

Every age boasts of extraordinary people. Esther was such a person. Prior to becoming the queen of Persia, she had at least four major things working against her.

First, she lost her parents at an early age. For a girl to lose her parents in the tender years of youth is a tragedy of immense proportions. Though obviously grateful for the love of Mordecai, her cousin, this was no substitute for the joy of growing up in a real home.

Second, she was reared in a pagan environment. Esther's presence in Persia was the result of the idolatry of her ancestors, forcing God to bring judgment upon Judah by means of the Babylonians, who were later conquered by the Persians. The nature of Esther's Persian environment can best be seen in the king's response to Haman's inconceivable proposal. When Haman proposed the annihilation of the entire Jewish race, Ahasuerus coldly and unhesitatingly declared, *" . . . do with them as it seemeth good to thee"* (Esther 3:11). Immediately orders were dispatched to the various provinces to *" . . . destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women . . ."* (Esther 3:13), after which *" . . . the king and Haman sat down to drink . . ."* (Esther 3:15).

Third, she was denied a normal life. The triune goal of every Jewish girl was marriage, family, and a home of her own. No doubt, Esther had often dreamed of those very joys of womanhood. Instead, she was placed in the harem of a king. In pagan society, it was not unusual for an undesired woman in the king's harem to exist in virtual solitude. Even as queen, Esther informed Mordecai on one occasion that she had not been with Ahasuerus for thirty days (Esther 4:11).

Fourth, she was compelled to sacrifice her virginity to a pagan king. For a young woman like Esther, virginity would be among her most treasured possessions. It would be something she would guard with her life until she could give herself in marriage to the man of her choice. Instead, she was taken from her home, and like some kind of material object, she was given to Ahasuerus, a man whom she had scarcely seen and for whom she had no love and no feeling.

What kind of person would one normally expect to come forth from such conditions? A woman angry with the world, possessing an intensely bitter spirit and sour disposition; one who felt cheated by life; a person with a negative attitude toward everything and everyone.

But even more acute were the temptations Esther faced on the other side of the tracks. She

became the queen of the most powerful nation in the world. Ahasuerus offered her half the kingdom (Esther 5:3). Following the death of Haman, all of his immense wealth was given to her (Esther 8:1). Thus, Esther lived daily with some of the most potentially destructive forces with which man has ever had to contend: power, enormous wealth, and worldly fame. Only eternity will reveal the legions destroyed by them. From these molds one would expect to see an individual characterized by arrogance, egotism, and self-sufficiency. In contrast, note Esther's sterling character:

First, she exhibited an humble and submissive spirit. Select women throughout the kingdom were assembled in Shushan, the palace, from which Ahasuerus would choose one to be the queen of Persia. These women were the most beautiful in the kingdom. No doubt most of them came from homes of the socially elite, women who had been pampered, petted, and catered to all of their lives. For the most part, such women would be vain, arrogant, and demanding. Prior to spending the night with the king, each one issued her demands and received whatever she desired (Esther 2:13). In contrast, Esther *". . . required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. . ."* (Esther 2:15).

Second, she possessed a lovely personality. *" . . . And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her"* (Esther 2:15). Providence? Yes, but respecting man's free moral agency, even providence must have something with which to work.

Third, she manifested a respectful and obedient spirit. Even after the royal crown adorned her head, the record declares, *" . . . Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him"* (Esther 2:20). She was queen of mighty Persia. She was powerful, wealthy, and famous. How easy it would have been to forget Mordecai, even to view him with contempt, but this could not be said of Esther.

Fourth, she was willing to sacrifice her life for her people. *" . . . I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish"* (Esther 4:16). She was willing, not only to surrender her power, position, wealth, and fame, but even her very life.

Esther is living proof that an individual can recover from personal tragedy, rise above a pagan environment, conquer extreme difficulties, and be a blessing to the world.✝

Frank Chesser is a preacher of the Gospel of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama, U. S. A.

A Successful Failure

Kevin L. Moore

Can you imagine what it would have been like to have traveled with the great apostle Paul? Most of us would consider this the chance of a lifetime. One fatherless young man from Jerusalem got such an opportunity. John Mark, the son of Mary (Acts 12:12), was given the opportunity to accompany, work with, and learn from this eminent missionary (Acts 13:5). Instead of taking full advantage of this situation, however, John Mark quit and returned home (Acts 13:13). Whether he was homesick, considered the work too hard, or had other reasons, his excuse was obviously unjustified in Paul's mind (Acts 15:38). John Mark was a quitter and a failure.

Despite his unsuccessful initiation into missionary work, John Mark went on to accompany and assist his cousin Barnabas in the mission field of Cyprus and possibly other areas (Acts 15:39). Furthermore, Paul later referred to John Mark as a fellow laborer (Jude 24), a fellow worker for the kingdom of God, and a comfort to him (Colossians 4:10,11). In fact, Paul went on to say concerning this young man, *". . . he is useful to me for ministry"* (2 Timothy 4:11). What made the difference? What turned this seeming failure into a success? Consider the following:

Barnabas did not resent John Mark or permanently label him as a failure. He was willing to give John Mark a second chance (Acts 15:37). Barnabas gave similar support to the poor (Acts 4:37), to Saul (Acts 9:27), to the Antioch church (Acts 11:22-24), and to the lost (Acts 13:1-5). No wonder the apostles called him "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36). We need more like Barnabas in the church today, who will encourage the "failures" to try again.

Moreover, John Mark was not willing to remain a quitter. He failed once, but he had the courage and determination to try again. It would have been easy for him to stay in his comfortable home environment and to accept the idea that he was not intended to be a missionary. But John Mark made

another attempt and was successful. We need more in the church today like John Mark, who will not succumb to their failures, but will try, try again.

Finally, Paul was willing to admit that he was wrong in his initial impression of John Mark, and he changed his attitude toward him. A lesser man would have been proud and unforgiving, but Paul practiced what he preached. He wrote, ". . . *put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do"* (Colossians 3:12,13). We need more in the church today who have humble and forgiving spirits like Paul.

Do you consider yourself a failure in your Christian service? Do you know of someone else who seems to be? Let's learn the lesson from John Mark's experience. "Once a failure" does not mean "Always a failure." If we can develop the determination of John Mark, the encouragement of Barnabas, and the forgiveness of Paul, we can all be "successful failures." ✞

Kevin L. Moore has done mission work in New Zealand and is presently a missionary-in-residence at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, U. S. A.

What is Love?

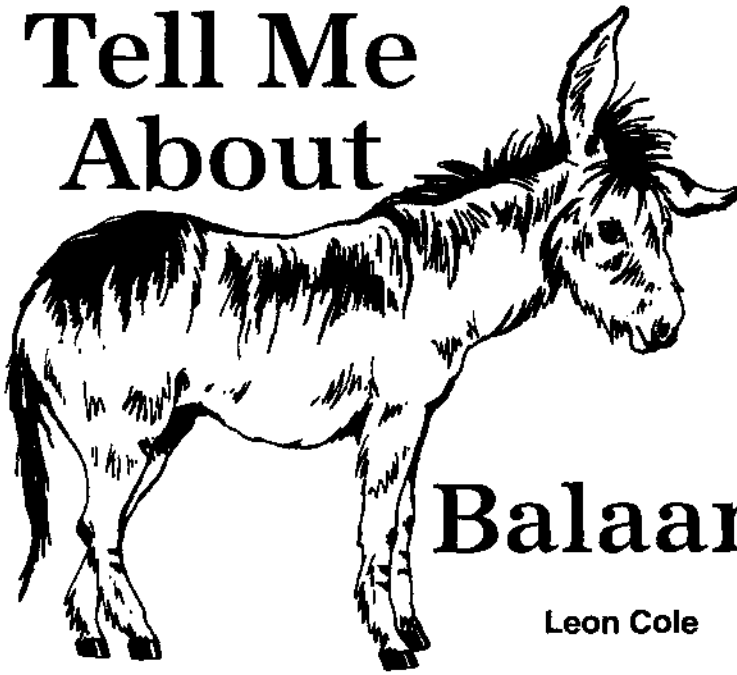
Love is an attitude,
Love is a prayer
For a soul in sorrow,
A heart in despair.

Love is good wishes
For the gain of another.
Love suffers long
with
The fault of a brother.

Love gives water
To a cup that's run
dry,
Love reaches low,
Love reaches high
Seeks not its own
At the expense of
another,
Love reaches God
When it reaches a
brother.

— Unknown

Tell Me About Balaam



Leon Cole

Balaam is not a major character of the Bible. He is mentioned in Revelation 2:14 as one whose example we are to avoid. But to know him we must go to the Old Testament to the book of Numbers, chapters 22-24.

Balaam likely entertained thoughts of honor, riches, and rewards as he made his trip on his donkey. The king had promised all of this if he would curse Moses and his people, whom God had delivered from the bondage of Egypt.

From all indications, Balaam's donkey was a well-trained animal. But for no apparent reason, it turned out of the road into a field. Balaam whipped her. Soon it happened again, but Balaam guided the donkey once again to the road. Then they came to a narrow place in the road, the donkey got scared and, trying to get out of the road, smashed Balaam's foot. Another beating followed.

Then, suddenly, Balaam saw what made the ass balk. The Angel of God stood in the middle of the road with a drawn sword. Had it not been for the

ass beholding the angel and leaving the road, Balaam would have been a dead man.

But why was all this opposition given to Balaam's traveling to see a king? Second Peter 2:15,16 gives the answer, *"forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."* Balaam's problem was greed. According to the angel, his way was perverse before the Lord (Numbers 22:32).

We would do well to avoid "the doctrine of Balaam." Let us strive to make our lives "channels of blessings" rather than a curse because we are greedy of gain. Remember our Lord warned, *"Beware of covetousness"* (Luke 12:15). ✞

Leon Cole preaches for the Pulaski Street Church of Christ in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, U. S. A.

Abraham Lincoln was walking one day with a friend along a path so narrow that they had to walk single file. They met another man walking toward them. When the man would not give way, Lincoln stepped aside to let the man pass. The friend was indignant. "Mr. President," he said, "you should not have done that. You should have made him stand aside."

With the simple wisdom that has made generations of Americans love him, Lincoln said, "But had I not stood aside, there would have been a collision."

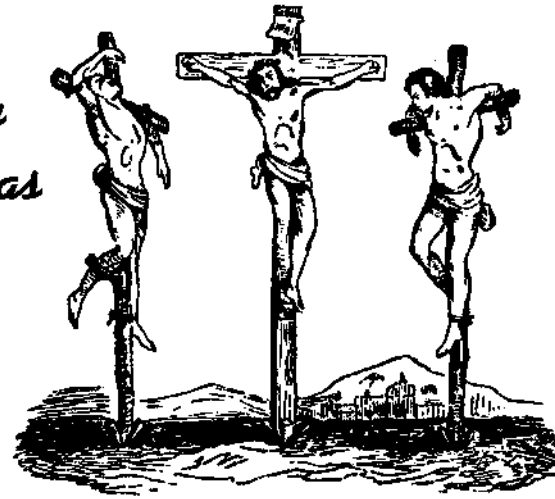
There's a parallel, I believe, in man's dealings with Christ. God, the maker of the world, sought man to love Him and abide in Him. Man stubbornly walked in his own way.

But Christ was willing to humble himself and go to the cross so that we can be saved. Thank God that He loved us enough to look beyond our stubborn rebellion!

"But God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:8.

—Anonymous

Can we be saved today in the same way that the thief on the cross was saved?



John Thiesen

The thief on the cross possessed certain convictions and a changing of his mind which we must also have if we are to be forgiven of our sins, but we cannot be saved in exactly the same way he was. His salvation was a direct speaking of pardon from the Lord personally while they were face to face on their respective crosses. Jesus often pardoned people during His ministry, and the thief was just another beneficiary of this personal ministry of the Lord.

Before the cross, Christ could forgive men on any terms He pleased. But when He died for our sins, the Bible says He set into force what is called a "testament," or will. From then on, the terms of His testament must be met by all, without respect of persons. The Hebrews writer points out that Christ's testament was not in force while He was alive before the cross, but that it is now in effect (Hebrews 9:15-17).

Some Things We have In Common With The Thief

The thief possessed some attitudes of mind which are essential in all who would come to the Lord. For instance, something about Jesus' manner on the cross persuaded him to believe that Jesus was the promised Christ. He begged Him, *"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"* (Luke 23:42). Seeing his faith, Jesus told him, *"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (verse 43). We must also come to this same conclusion

and confess that Jesus is Lord if we are to be saved today.

The penitence of the thief was obvious in that he now rebuked his fellow thief for reviling Jesus. Earlier he had joined with him in this activity, but now he scolded him saying, *"Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds"* (Luke 23:39-41). He was now ashamed of his sins and sorry for them. We have to feel that way about our sins, as well, if we are to be forgiven today.

Where Our Salvation Differs From The Thief's

Although our salvation is similar to that of the thief's in regard to faith in Christ and repentance from sin, it differs in that we must be baptized into Christ. This is one of the requirements of Christ's testament, which went into effect after His death on the cross. From that time Jesus told His apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, and *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16). The thief was not subject to this requirement because Jesus had not yet given it when they were on the cross. ✞

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

Listening To Thieves

Three men hung crying (naked)
Rain spilling down
Through their feet
But one man spilled blood

Three men hung talking (naked)
One was groaning
The other searching
For the third man's knowing

Three men hung praying (naked)
One was cursing
The other pleading
And the third was calling out

Three men hung dying (naked)
One tasted fire
In his carcass wasted
The other was carried by the third.

— Kevin Max Smith
from **At The Foot Of Heaven**

Is Baptism Really Required?

Wayne Jackson

Why do some insist that baptism is a requirement for salvation when the Bible simply says, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21)?

The question assumes that calling upon the Lord's name, and being baptized, are mutually exclusive obligations. They are not.

Consider the following:

(1) It is evident that merely "calling" on the name of the Christ is not sufficient to effect salvation since Jesus Himself declared: *"Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who **does** the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). Clearly, therefore, "calling" on Christ involves more than a mere verbal plea.

(2) In Acts 2, the same apostle who promised salvation to all who *"call on the name of the Lord,"* also commanded: *"Repent ye, and be immersed each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ to obtain the forgiveness of your sins"* (Acts 2:38). Since the *"shall be saved"* of 2:21 is equivalent to the "forgiveness of sins" in 2:38, it necessarily follows that *"calling on the name of the Lord"* includes both repentance and baptism.

(3) Later testimony from the New Testament makes it apparent that the person who submits to baptism, in order to receive pardon, is calling on the name of the Lord. Note Acts 22:16. Ananias instructed the penitent Saul as follows: *"And now why do you tarry? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name."*

All who wish to enjoy the remission of past sins will call on the name of the Lord by obeying the gospel plan of redemption. In no other way can one receive pardon. ✝

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

Sincerity is no substitute for truth;
Sincerity is no guarantee of truth.

Who Intercedes and Mediates for Us?

T. Pierce Brown

The question is sometimes asked, "Since 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is one mediator between God and man — Christ Jesus, who intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:24) — how is it that Romans 8:26 indicates that the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us?" The basic question is, "If there is one, and only one, mediator, how can there be two?" Possibly a related problem would be, "If we can discover that there is more than one mediator, maybe some man, such as a preacher, priest, or Pope, might also be one."

One key to the problem is the failure to distinguish between things that differ. "Intercession" is from the Greek word "enteuxis" and means "a petition with respect to." The verb "entugchano," translated "deal with" once and "make intercession" four times, means "make petition or intercession **either for or against** a person." (See Acts 25:24, where the Jews made intercession against Paul.) The Spirit makes intercession (Romans 8:26), Christ makes intercession (Romans 8:24; Hebrews 7:25), and we are to make intercession for each other (1 Timothy 2:11; 4:5). God in no way, at no time, limited the number of persons who are allowed to intercede for another.

However, the word "mediator" is from the Greek word "mesites," and literally means "a go-between" — one who mediates between two parties to produce a reconciliation of differences. Christ is our mediator in a way that no one else is or can be. The peculiar nature of man's relationship with God demanded a special mediator. Man was estranged from God by sin, and there needed to be a price paid, an offer made and accepted before man could be reconciled to God. Although Moses could be a mediator of the law (Galatians 3:19), he could not accomplish what Christ needed to and did accomplish as a mediator.

In a dispute between labor and management, a federal mediator may be able to offer certain things to management on behalf of labor, and to offer certain other things to

labor on behalf of management. He may or may not intercede, but if he does, it is a different function from that of mediation.

As the *mediator* of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15), Christ entered once (for all) into the Holy Place to make possible this reconciliation of man to God (Hebrews 9:24-28); but one can *intercede* to God on behalf of man without being a *mediator*.

Although this is a slightly different aspect of the same subject, it is my considered judgment that the intercession of the Holy Spirit spoken of in Romans 8:26 is done through the prayers of the individual who does not know what to pray for as he ought, so he makes inarticulate groans in the spirit, and the Spirit by whom he lives knows and "interprets" these groanings to God who searches the hearts. One would need to have an unusual concept of the Holy Spirit to conclude that the Holy Spirit Himself had to express his mind by inarticulate groanings. But this intercession of the Spirit, however it may be done, is not the same as the mediatorial office or function of Jesus as spoken of in 1 Timothy 2:5.

I realize that a far more scholarly and definitive article could be written about this profound subject, answering additional questions, and dealing with them in greater depth, but perhaps this is at least enough to help make us more aware of the differences between intercession and mediation, and that the particular kind of mediation Christ does for us is unique. ⇧

T. Pierce Brown works with the Sycamore congregation in Cookeville, Tennessee, U. S. A.

How can YOU be Involved in Personal Work?

1. Discuss Christianity with a friend.
2. Give someone a tract on a particular subject.
3. Tell and show others the happiness of being a Christian.
4. Invite someone to worship with you.
5. Visit a newcomer to the community and invite them to the services.
6. Give encouragement to a new member.
7. Bring a friend to Bible class with you.
8. Encourage a fellow Christian to get involved in activities of the church.
9. Prepare food where there is an illness or a death in the family.
10. Visit the sick and shut-ins.
11. Speak a word of encouragement to a weak member.

—Jimmy Ferguson

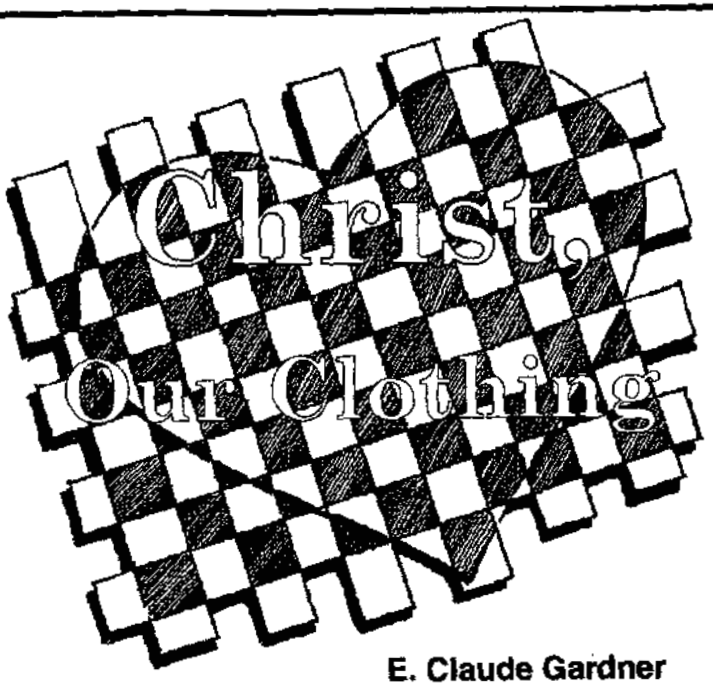
Our Relationship in Jesus Christ

"These . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." —Rev. 7:14

JESUS CHRIST IS—		THE CHURCH IS—		A CHRISTIAN IS—	
HEAD	Eph. 1:22-23	THE BODY	Col. 1:18	A MEMBER	1 Cor. 12:27
SAVIOUR	1 Jno. 4:14	THE SAVED	Eph. 5:23	SAVED	Rom. 8:24
REDEEMER	Tit. 2:14	REDEEMED	1 Pet. 1:18	REDEEMED	Eph. 1:7
WASHER	Eph. 5:26	WASHED	1 Cor. 6:11	WASHED	Rev. 1:5
SANCTIFIER	Eph. 2:11	SANCTIFIED	1 Cor. 1:2	A SAINT	Phil. 1:1
HEIR OF GOD	Rom. 8:16	JOINT HEIRS	Rom. 8:17	HEIR OF GOD	Gal. 3:29
KING	1 Tim. 6:15	KINGDOM	Heb. 12:28	A CITIZEN	Eph. 2:19
SHEPHERD	Jno. 10:11	SHEEPFOLD	Jno. 10:11	IN FLOCK	Acts 20:28

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." —2 Cor. 5:17.

Dillard Thurman



E. Claude Gardner

I. Introduction:
   A. *"For as many of you as were immersed into Christ, clothed yourselves with Christ"* (Galatians 3:27, McCord Translation).
   B. Christ is my everything.
   C. Clothes are used literally and figuratively in the Bible.

II. Discussion:
   A. Three-fold purpose of clothing — so is Christ.
      1. For beauty, to make us more attractive.
         a. Luke 12:27,28.
         b. Clothed in white if one overcomes (Revelation 3:5).
         c. Christ can make a life beautiful (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:3-7).
      2. For protection.
         a. Jesus is our shepherd who protects (Psalm 23; John 10:11,27-29).
         b. No condemnation (Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:7).

3. For covering our nakedness or shame.
   a. Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:7).
   b. Jesus came to cover our shameful sins (1 John 4:9,10; Hebrews 8:12).

B. *"Put on Christ,"* or be clothed.
   1. Put on the new man (Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 3:10).
   2. This means that we will put on the characteristics of Christ (Philippians 2:5; 1 John 2:6).
   3. The lukewarm are naked (Revelation 3:14-17).

C. When do we put on Christ? When are we clothed?
   1. We are not clothed with Christ by faith only.
   2. We are clothed with Christ as taught by Paul in Galatians 3:26,27 and the completion is at baptism.

III. Conclusion:

A. "I know that I am saved without baptism" is to state that one can be saved without being clothed with Christ.

B. To evangelize the world, we are to be clothed with Christ, with the characteristics of Christ. ✝

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

How Did You Like The Sermon?

This is a familiar question. By what guidelines do we determine a good sermon? I suggest a sermon is successful if:

1. It is true to God's word.
2. It is preached in love.
3. It is prepared to meet a need.
4. It is spoken so that all can understand.
5. It glorifies God.
6. It challenges people to think.

Sermons are to be measured not by the approval and pleasure of people, but by their response in holy living, Godly action, and true Christian dedication.

Paul's admonition is still true — "If I were trying to win human approval, I should never be Christ's servant" (Galatians 1:10).

—The Exhorter

Ken Tyler

Purpose: To emphasize what every family needs.

I. The Bible (Deuteronomy 6:1,2; Psalm 19:7; Romans 1:16; John 12:48; James 2:12).
   A. Families are without direction because they are without the Bible (Psalm 119:105).
      1. We must wake up before it is too late.
      2. How important is the Bible in your family?

II. The church (Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 14:12).
   A. If most people were honest they would have to say that the church is not the most important thing to them.
      1. The church is the means by which God saves the world (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 8:4).

III. Time (What shall I give my son?).

What Shall I Give My Son?

What shall you give to one small boy?
A glamorous 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."

A. The family is being destroyed by lack of attention.
   1. It takes time to build the right kind of family (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).
   2. How much quality time is your family spending together?

IV. Loyalty (Ephesians 5:22-25,33; Ephesians 6:1-4).
   A. Loyalty in the family seems to be a forgotten virtue in our society.
      1. We cannot let our environment destroy our commitment to the family.
      2. Are you devoted to your family's needs?

Conclusion: Each family should take heed to Deuteronomy 6:10-12. What are you giving your family?

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

Once upon a time, parents had a lot of kids. Now kids have a lot of parents.

ITALY

Charles W. Moore

When I think of Italy I think of the land of the boot. I think of the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, cool breezes, flowers, twisting roads, cities sitting on a hill, and mountains. I see rich valleys, rolling hills, fruit trees and vineyards. I can smell the bread in the hot ovens, and chestnuts roasting. I can taste the strong espresso coffee served in those tiny little cups. I think of a big bowl of spaghetti covered with delicious tomato sauce and parmesan cheese. A fresh salad, two or three kinds of meat such as sword fish, thin steaks, roasted chicken, ham and/or Italian sausage will likely make up the main course. Five-course meals are common, with hours of sweet fellowship and laughter.

When I think of Italy I think of fervent prayers and precious moments discussing the word of God. **We have been there.** We have lived there for many years, working with the Lord's people. God gave the increase. Italy will be in our hearts forever.

WE LOVE THE ITALIANS

They are sweet people — almost 60 million precious souls for whom Jesus died. Few Italians have a knowledge of the word of God, though they have thirsty souls. They are hungry for the truth. They willingly discuss the Scriptures with you. Their traditional faith in Catholicism runs deep in some things; but only a small percentage of the people go to mass regularly.

Various Protestant groups such as the Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses are active and growing. Family ties are profound. In the minds

of Italians, it is worse to betray parents by leaving the ancestral religion than to betray Catholicism itself. But many people obey the gospel in spite of what their family thinks. That kind of faith often leads other family members to the Lord.

THE ITALIANS LOVE THE LORD

We moved to Italy in 1957. The early battles were fought by the Padens, Chishoms, Heckers, Mitchells, Stories, Pownels, Bybees, Hudsons, and Howells. Others picked up the banner through the years and lifted it high. Many converts had an active part in laying the ground work. Small striving congregations, about fifty in all, were established from one end of Italy to the other. Sicily was not excluded. *The people in the south proved to be more receptive to the gospel than those in the north.* The total number of Christians in Italy would be about one thousand. Workers have used benevolence, orphan homes, youth camps, Bible schools, printing ministries, Bibles, tracts, books, correspondence courses, gospel meetings, campaign groups, radio and T.V. programs and an endless number of home Bible stud-

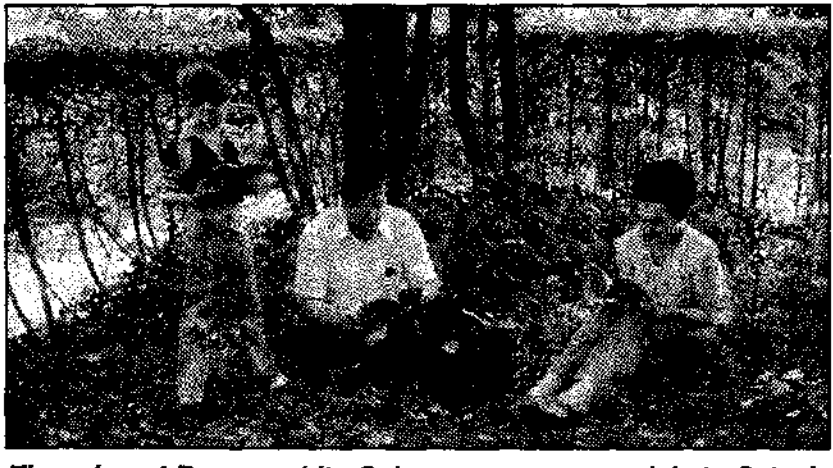
A view of the inside of the Colosseum, showing the underground cells where wild animals and prisoners were kept.

ies to reach out to the people. All of these methods have produced good fruits in their own way.

ITALY'S GREATEST NEED

During his personal ministry, while he was here on the earth, Jesus said, *"The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few"* (Matthew 9:37). Italy still hasn't been evangelized after all these years. The gospel has never been preached in its simplicity and purity in thousands of big and little cities throughout the nation. It isn't humanly possible to reach out to all of these people with the small number of workers who are available. Most congregations carry on their own work and worship without the help of full time evangelists. We know by experience that **"cream comes to the top"** and this is the case in most of the small congregations in Italy. The mature Christians do the preaching and teaching and carry on the work. **The church of the Lord is alive and well in Italy.** Your Italian brethren need your prayers. ✞

Charles W. Moore is an evangelist working with the Church of Christ, Rockwall, Texas, U.S.A.



The ruins of Rome and its Colosseum are memorials to Satan's intention to destroy Christianity through persecution. In this photograph, Betty, J.C., and Shannon (Choate) worship God on the site of the Roman Forum according to the beautiful pattern given by our Lord almost 2000 years ago — Victory in Him!

AVANTI ITALIA

Howard Bybee

I believe that we are finally waking up to the potential existing in our young people. The College Church in Searcy, Arkansas has taken the oversight of a program designed to challenge college graduates to give two years to mission work before going into their careers. These elders believe that this concept represents a great potential for strengthening the church both in the mission field and at home.

"THIS TWO YEAR COMMITMENT WOULD STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH AT HOME AND ABROAD."

The Avanti Italia (Forward Italy) program began in 1987 in Florence, Italy. My wife, Doris, and I, having served as missionaries to Italy for many years, were again in the country, where I was directing the Florence Bible School. Dr. Carl Mitchell, with his wife Frankie, also long-term Italian missionaries, was in Florence directing Pepperdine's Year-in-Europe program. Harding's branch program called HUF (Harding University in Florence) was also active there at that time with about 40 students each semester. Brother Mitchell and I together decided to challenge these students to make a commitment to return to Florence after they graduated, to help spread the message of Christ. Some students began to accept the challenge and in 1987 they returned to do a great work. Each year new workers came and with their youthful enthusiasm they generated growth where there had been very little. It became obvious that this program needed to be continued and expanded. For this to happen, though, required that someone spread the challenge and recruit workers on a full-time basis.

THE SUCCESS OF THESE YOUNG WORKERS DICTATED THAT THE CHALLENGE NEEDED TO BE SPREAD ABROAD.

In 1990 Doris and I moved back to Searcy, Arkansas to recruit for this program. At that time the College Church took on the oversight of this work and I began traveling to various Christian colleges, campus ministries, etc.

challenging Christians to consider giving two years exclusively to the Lord's work before going into their careers. Young people from various Christian and state colleges began to take part. Graduates of Harding, Pepperdine, Abilene Christian, Freed-Hardeman, University of California, University of New Mexico, Texas Tech and Louisiana State University have been or are involved in the program.

Other religious groups have demonstrated that involving young people for a two year period can be very effective. We preach the concept of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5,9). We say that we are all priests and therefore have the obligation and the privilege of doing the Lord's work. In practice, however, we let the preacher do it. For the most part the members do not know how to share the saving message with others. One reason is that evangelizing is something that can be learned only by doing. It can't be learned in a class room. If young people dedicated two years exclusively to evangelistic work, they would learn how to do it. This experience would result in the saving of lost souls, and at the same time would give them experience and would develop talents that would make them more productive Christians for the rest of their lives.

The Avanti Italia program is now well under way and very successful. The College Church elders have set up a committee to direct and oversee this program. It is composed of Dr. Carl Mitchell, Dr. Cliff Ganus, Dr. Fred Jewell, Dr. Don England, Bob Corbin and myself. The decision was made to require students to graduate from college before taking part in the work because of the added maturity and to avoid the possibility of permanently interrupting a student's college education. However, a Christian can be accepted into the program who has chosen not to go to college and can provide recommendations attesting to his/her spiritual maturity. All applications are screened by the committee in an effort to find those who are spiritually and emotionally suited for such a challenge.

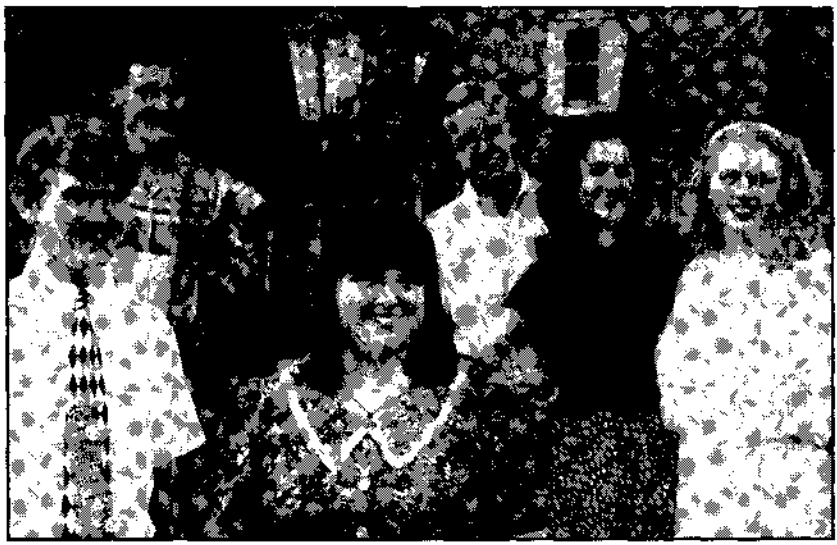
"RAISING FUNDS IS NOT EASY, BUT WITH THE LORD'S HELP IT CAN BE DONE"

Those who commit to the program must raise $850 a month to cover their expenses. We encourage them to seek a monthly commitment from family, friends and churches where they are known. Before a group leaves they are given two weeks of intensive training in Searcy, consisting primarily of classes on Evangelism, Catholic

Doctrine, Atheism, Evidences, Cults, Group Dynamics, and Cross Cultural Communication. They then go to Florence and live together in a villa that belongs to the College Church. They go to language school and begin their evangelistic work immediately under the direction of Jay Walls. Jay, who is accompanied by his wife Alicia, is the resident director of the program. Jay went through the program himself from 1987 to 1990. He returned, completed his work for his master's degree in music at North Texas University in Denton, and taught school in Houston before becoming director.

If you are a young Christian reading this, contact us for more information. If you are an older person we would like for you to present this challenge to every young Christian you know. You can request information from Howard Bybee, College Church of Christ, 712 E. Race Street, Searcy, AR 72143, or call (501) 268-7717 or you may E-mail to AvantiItalia @harding.edu. ✝

Pictured here is the last team to go.



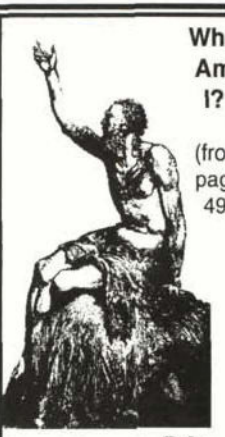
Lewis Short — Harding; Jeff Taylor — Freed Hardeman; Yvonne Williams — Harding; Paul and Jenny Pruett - Harding/LSU; Lanelda Burnam — ACU.

Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search – 11 (from page 80)

1. Lazarus, Martha, Mary.
2. The Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair.
3. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." He stayed two more days in that place.
4. He loved them.
5. Because the Jews there had recently tried to stone Him, accusing Him of blasphemy.
6. "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."
7. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
8. "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God."
9. He groaned, was troubled, and wept.
10. "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind; dying?"
11. "Take away the stone."
12. There would be a stench because he had been dead four days.
13. "That they may believe that You sent Me."
14. Lazarus was restored to life and came out of the tomb.
15. Jews; had seen the things Jesus did; believed in Him.
16. The Pharisees and leaders hardened their hearts against Him.
17. Yes,they admitted He had done many signs.
18. To kill Him.

Who Am I? (from page 49)



Job

The Book of Philippians

Rejoice in the Lord.
Philippians 4:4a

(page 20)

For further information, please contact:

Italian Republic

Government: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
President: OSCAR LUIGI SCALFARO
Prime Minister: ROMANO PRODI

Secular Facts:

Location: A republic in southern Europe, a boot extending out into the Mediterranean Sea.

Land Mass: 116,324 square miles; 845 miles long and from 150 to 380 miles wide.

Population: 60,000,000.

Major Cities: **Rome,** Milano, Torino, Florence, Naples, Palermo and Catania.

Weather: Highly varied; extremely cold in the higher elevations, to semi-tropical along the southern coasts.

Language: Italian, English, German, French.

Literacy: 97%.

Religion: 89 % Roman Catholic.

Economy: Principal agricultural products include grapes, olives, citrus fruits, vegetables, and wheat. Textiles, wearing apparel, shoes, metals, transport equipment, and chemicals are exported. 58% of the population is in services.

Monetary Unit: Lira.

The Church:

Congregations: There are 59 congregations, with approximately 1265 active membership. Most congregations are small, the largest being about 120 members.

History: During the first century Christianity flourished in Italy. The apostle Paul addressed a letter to the church in Rome, which was begun without apostolic help and without any of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. Tradition says that both Paul and Peter died in Rome. The Catacombs attest to the fact that many Christians lived and died in the capital city of the Empire.

Modern History: The church was re-established in Rome soon after the end of World War II. Gordon Linscott, the first American missionary, came in 1948, followed by 15 others the next year. Among these were the Gerald, Cline and Harold Padens.

Opposition aided growth in the 20th Century as it had in the First. Today the church owns 19 meeting places and the facilities of Florence Bible School. Both Harding and Pepperdine operate extension schools in Florence and own their buildings.

There are only 12 full-time Italian preachers and few foreign missionaries. It is hoped that others will join the forces.

Front Cover: **The Colosseum** of Rome, built in 70 A.D., was an arena of death for Christians.