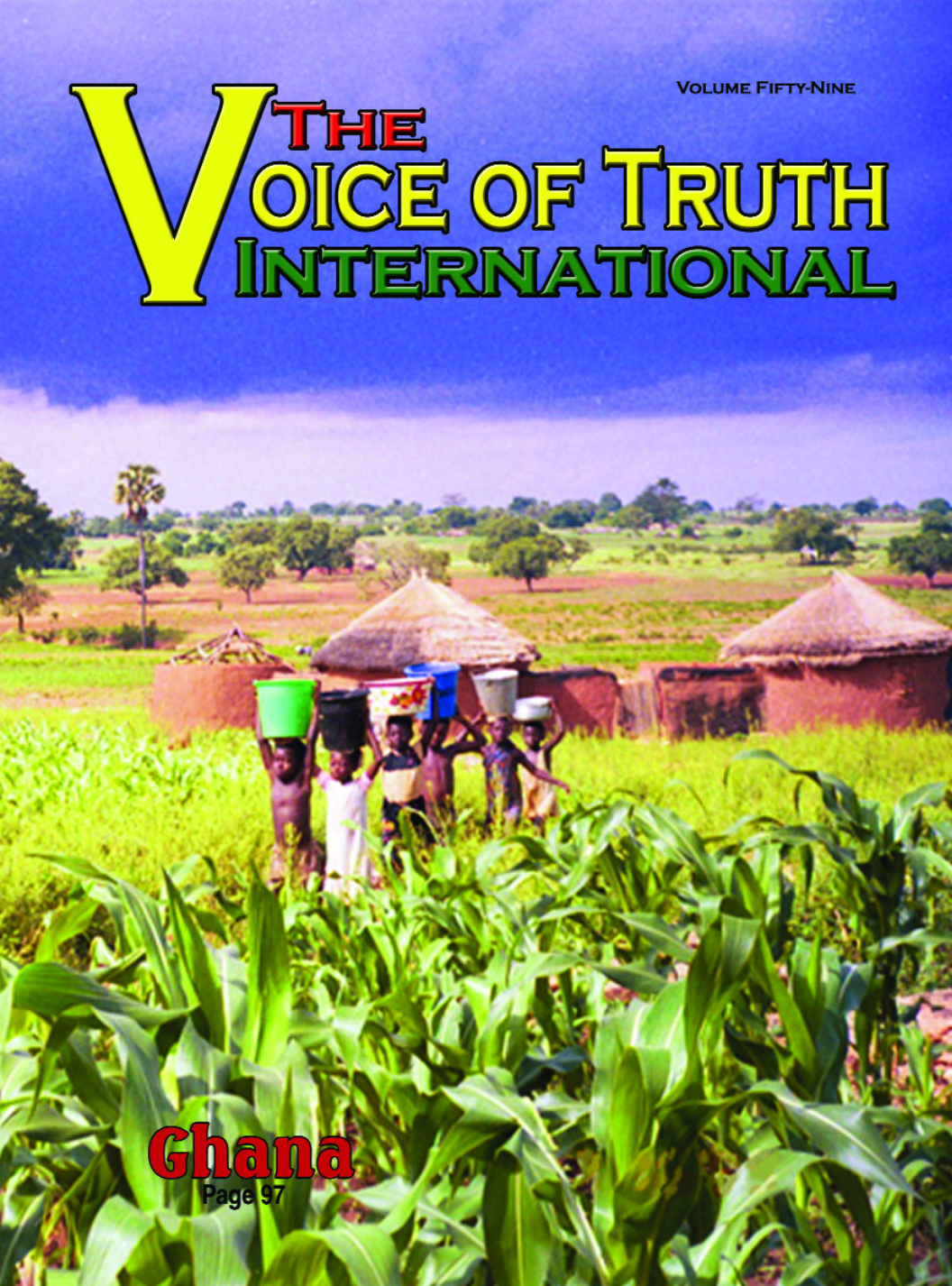
Volume Fifty-Nine

The Voice of Truth International



Ghana

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How do people get into Christ?
How are we washed in the blood that was shed on the cross?
How do we get forgiveness?
How are we saved?

6. ... 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**.(Romans 6:4)

5. ... as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).

4. ... with the mouth **confession is made** unto salvation (Romans 10:10).

3. ... **unless you repent** you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3).

2. ... he who comes to God must **believe that He [Christ] is** ... (Hebrews 11:6).

1. ... faith comes by hearing, and **hearing by the word of God** (Romans 10:17).

BEGIN your walk here

The Voice of Truth International

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

Nothing Else Matters

Byron Nichols, Editor

Speaking words of wisdom and truth is not limited to those who have acquired advanced degrees from the most prestigious universities of the world. Such words are not necessarily the product of the minds of folks who have achieved notable success in extremely difficult types of endeavors. Wise statements are not even limited to mature adults — occasionally we are amazed by the wisdom that comes forth from some who are very young, not yet even adolescents.

Now, let's narrow the field somewhat. Is it not true that even wise observations and assessments in the realm of religion are uttered at times by people who are not deep students of the Bible? Many of us have likely heard or read words of great religious significance from the mouth or pen of folks who are not even Christians, either by choice or through lack of biblical knowledge.

Please consider some words of great spiritual importance from one of these seemingly unlikely sources. In so doing, a little bit of background information is needed. One of the better-known names in missionary work is that of E. Stanley Jones. Mr. Jones was renowned for his efforts over many years to evangelize the Hindu nation of India. While not being able to endorse the doctrine that Jones preached, one can surely admire his commitment to do and teach that which he thought to be right. On one particular occasion Mr. Jones was teaching a group of Hindus about Jesus Christ. As Hindus, they had not had much, if any, exposure to the existence or purpose of Jesus. After hearing Mr. Jones speak very favorably about Jesus and how that Jesus is the only means of salvation for mankind, one very perceptive Hindu man said to the preacher, "If what you are telling us about this Jesus is not true, it doesn't matter; but if what you are telling us is true, nothing else matters!"

This unbeliever caught on in a hurry — he saw immediately that Jesus

was either a fraud or was fantastic. He could see that if Christianity is valid, everything else must be deemed as insignificant by comparison. He quickly realized that if Jesus really is the Savior, to not be with Him, or for Him, would be the same as being against Him, to be in opposition to Him (Matthew 12:30). This perceptive Hindu had no difficulty in understanding the message from Jesus, "*He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it*" (Matthew 10:39). He could see that unless Jesus proved to be a counterfeit, His followers must put Him first; they must make the success of His mission in this world their greatest priority.

While it is not known whether Mr. Jones explicitly drew attention to and expounded upon the words of Jesus in John 14:6, the response from the man in the audience certainly would lend credence to the possibility that he heard the preacher place special emphasis on the assertion of Jesus, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*." To seriously contemplate that claim could indeed lead one to fervently respond with the affirmation that nothing else matters at all, if the claims about and by Jesus are based on fact, and are thus accurate.

We are Christ's church. It would appear that we wholeheartedly believe Jesus really is all that He claimed to be. As His individual followers we wear Christ's name, and as His collective followers, the church, we similarly acknowledge His ownership and headship in the name the church wears. However, the question confronts us, "Are we to the point spiritually that nothing else really matters when it comes to establishing and maintaining our priorities in life?"

Peter forcefully declared to a throng of Jews, "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:36). This profound assertion underscores for us the fact that since Jesus is the Lord, we then are but servants, being subject to His direction and will. Surely this knowledge should greatly impact our attitudes and actions as His people.

We must be willing to acknowledge the fact that truth is truth, regardless of who says it. While it is not the prevailing practice of those who do not believe in God, or those whose lives are full of wickedness, to speak words of truth and wisdom, it still occurs from time to time. With this in mind, are we prepared to let a Hindu man, one who certainly is not a follower of Jesus Christ, teach us something that we should already know, be preaching, and be practicing?

The Lord's church should be declaring in word and in deed that "nothing else matters" in comparison with putting Jesus Christ first in all things. ✞

Do You Want Heaven the Easy Way?

Jerry Bates

Do you want Heaven the easy way? Most of us would readily answer "**YES**" to that question. We do want to reach Heaven one day, and we do not want to sacrifice much for it either. It is like the story of a brash, energetic young man eager to reach the top in the business world. He went to a well-known millionaire businessman and asked him the first reason for his success. Without hesitation the businessman answered, "Hard work." After a lengthy pause the young man asked, "What is the second reason?"

Satan tried to lure Jesus with success the easy way. In Matthew 4, we read of the three temptations of Jesus. Those three temptations might be summarized by saying that Satan was offering Jesus instant success, instant glamour, and instant gratification at no cost. Jesus would not have to go to the cross to receive the praise and honor of men.

The disciples were also looking for the easy way. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asked His disciples, "*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*" Peter enthusiastically answered in verse 16, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Then Jesus changed the subject. In verse 21, we find that He began to tell His disciples that He must suffer many things and eventually be killed. Peter did not like that at all. He took Jesus to the side and rebuked Him. Imagine that! After boldly confessing that Jesus was the Son of God (which also meant that Jesus was Deity), Peter now thinks he can give God advice. He said, "*Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!*" Jesus responded with some of the harshest words that we find Him ever speaking. "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to*

me, for you are not mindful of things of God, but the things of men."

Jesus made it clear that the path to Heaven is not easy. Yes, Jesus paved the way; however, He never said that following that way would be easy. In fact, He plainly declared that the opposite is true. He promised His apostles that the world would hate them (John 15:18-20). He assures us that as His followers we must expect to encounter opposition, just as the world has always opposed God's prophets. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "*If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" Self-denial is not easy, and certainly taking up one's cross is not easy.

Yet, many churches are trying to give you Heaven the easy way. A friend of mine, David French, who is now a missionary in Zambia, asked me one day several months ago, "Is the church a cruise ship or is it a battleship?" Obviously, there is a big difference between the two. A cruise ship is designed for the pleasure of its passengers. It offers them beautiful surroundings, never-ending food and entertainment options, and makes few demands upon its customers. The passenger is certainly never required to sacrifice. The battleship is quite different. The battleship is made of hard, steel armor. The comfort and enjoyment of its crew are not high on the list of priorities. Sacrifice is often required and expected if its mission of destroying the enemy is to be achieved.

Many churches are trying to be like a cruise ship. They offer beautiful buildings filled with all the comforts one could ever want. Little sacrifice and commitment are required. The worship services are designed to make you feel good about yourself, your life, and your relationship with God. The sermons are always very positive, with little or no mention of sin and self-denial. Condemnation of anyone's lifestyle or beliefs will certainly never be found. Love is the operative word.

We are in a spiritual battle with spiritual foes of darkness. We know that nations will never win a physical war with a navy composed of cruise ships, and the same is true spiritually. We will never be able to win our spiritual warfare in a cruise ship church. After suffering much in his life, Paul assured the young man Timothy, "*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3). As much as we would like to believe it, there is no easy way to Heaven. We must be willing to suffer and sacrifice just as Christ has sacrificed even more for us. It may not be easy, but it will certainly be worth the effort. Paul by inspiration assures us of that fact (1 Corinthians 2:9; Romans 8:18). Do you believe it? ✞

The Mechanics of Preaching: Word Choice

Louis Rushmore

Words are the primary vehicle of communication, especially for preaching. *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:14,17). It is clear, though, that preaching involves more than simply reading Scripture; Philip's explanation of Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian treasurer obviously included words beyond reading Scripture, forasmuch as he evidently taught the treasurer about baptism (Acts 8:30-36). We must, therefore, choose carefully the uninspired words that we combine with the inspired Word of God as we preach and teach one another. Following are some suggestions concerning the mechanics of preaching, especially as it pertains to the choice of words for communicating the Word of God to our fellow man.

FIRST

Choose language that is befitting the mention of God or holy things in the same breath. Certainly, there is a way of expressing oneself in words that is vulgar and profane under any circumstances, the type of language that ought never to roll off of the tongue of a child of God (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8). Yet, other profane language is not dignified enough to be associated with conveying God's Word (e.g., slang or flippant references to God or holy things). Almighty God and His inspired Word deserve reverential treatment (Hebrews 12:28). *"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him"* (Psalm 89:7).

SECOND

Choose language that does not run the risk of relegating the Word of God to a level on par with fairy-tales and myth. For instance, avoid using the word "story" to describe events in the Word of God (e.g., Bible stories, the story of the great flood, etc.), because though the word "story" can mean "narrative," "account" or "chronicle," the word "story" can also mean "fairy tale", "yarn", "tale", and "legend". We should make word choices that do not run the risk of leading the hearers to associate the Word of God (or something within it) with the same category of literature from which we may have learned about Santa Claus, Little Red Riding Hood, the tortoise and the hare, the three pigs or Aesop's Fables. Some uninspired stories may teach admirable lessons and illustrate moral truths that we need to learn, but they cannot compare to the inspired Word of God.

THIRD

Avoid punctuating preaching with words like "I think" or "I believe". What any of us think or believe is inconsequential compared to what God through His inspired Word communicated to us. We need to tell those before whom we stand teaching the Word of God what *God thinks* through *what He has caused to be recorded in the Bible for mankind to*

"I think" is a presumptuous statement where biblical doctrine is concerned.

embrace and practice. Emphasize, rather, book, chapter and verse or the occasions of "thus saith the Lord" that appear upon the pages of inspiration. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"* (1 Peter 4:11).

FOURTH

Choose words that best express the divine message with clarity and brevity. Especially radio or television speakers and writers constricted by meager space limitations must make every word count, avoiding unnecessary words that do not add to but rather detract from the process of successful communication. The type of self-discipline a radio or television speaker or a writer limited to a maximum number of words must adopt would enhance the preparation and presentation of sermons and teaching lessons, too. Choose declarative statements that are calculated to have the greatest

impact on the comprehension of one's auditors; avoid the frequent use of passive sentences and contractions.

FIFTH

The use of descriptive language can clarify the words with which sermons convey God's message. Short of being unnecessarily wordy, a few carefully selected modifiers can enrich the transmission of a message by making it more interesting and painting word pictures (e.g., adjectives modify nouns and adverbs modify verbs). In addition, modifiers can concisely refine the definition of words. For instance, any of the adjectives "salt", "stagnant", "fresh", "deep", etc. before the noun "water" define water in a way — and briefly — that without a modifier (or more wordy descriptions) is not possible.

Words are the building blocks of communication from one person to another (as well as from God to mankind through the Bible). A careful selection of the words with which one conveys God's message to his fellow man contributes to comprehension. Comprehension or understanding must precede application of God's Word to one's life. Life eternal for any of us depends upon implementing the Word of God in one's life. "*He that is of God heareth God's words …*" (John 8:47). "*… It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). "*Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). ✞

What a Preacher Needs

The strength of an ox,
The daring of a lion,
The harmlessness of a dove,
The gentleness of a sheep,
The vision of an eagle,
The perspective of a giraffe,
The endurance of a camel,
The stomach of a horse,
The faithfulness of a prophet,
The fervency of an evangelist,
The tenacity of a bulldog,
The wisdom of an owl,
The industry of a beaver,
The versatility of a chameleon,
The hide of a rhinoceros,
The disposition of an angel,
The bounce of a kangaroo,
The loyalty of an apostle,
The tenderness of a shepherd,
The perseverance of a father,
The devotion of a mother,
And then, he would not please everyone!

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Be Still, and Know That I Am God

Danny Boggs

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride... Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; he burns the chariots with fire. 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11).

During the reign of Jehoshaphat, Judah feared an impending attack by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites. Johoshaphat and the people of

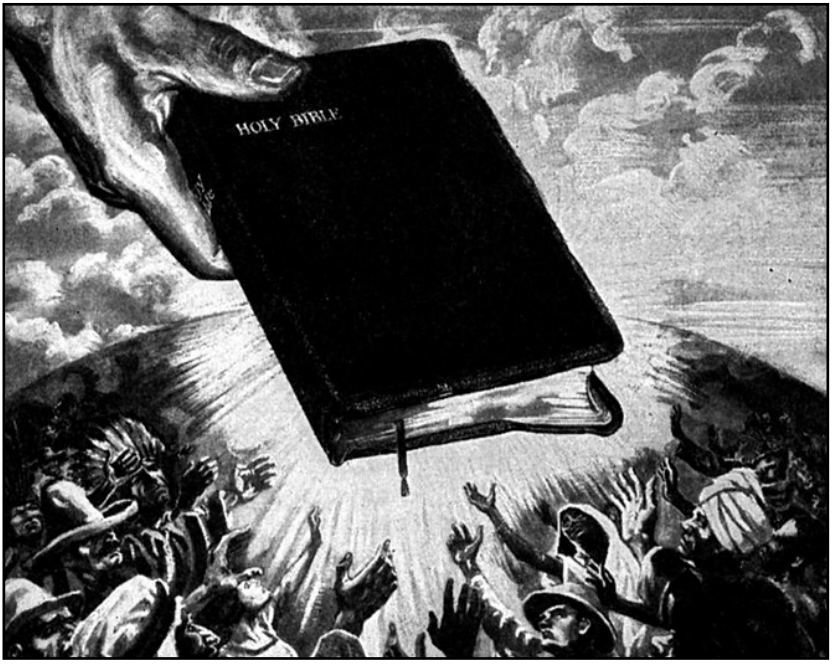
Judah gathered themselves together to bring their anxiety before the Lord. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon one Jahaziel, and the Lord said, "*Do not fear or be dismayed because of the great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's"* (2 Chronicles 20:15). They were told that God would be with them in the battle and that they could stand and see the Lord's salvation in their behalf. Hearing God's reassuring message, the sons of Kohath and Korah broke into joyful song, apparently singing this psalm of trust and praise.

The army rose the next day to go to battle, led by a group of singing Levites. Upon reaching the enemy armies, God's people found that the Lord had caused ambushes to be set for their enemies, who turned and killed each other! (This account appears in 2 Chronicles 20.)

What an awesome God our Lord is! He is in control everywhere, and yet He is here for each of us. We would live in peace and contentment with a song in our hearts, if only we would realize that we are not alone; the battle is the Lord's. He is our refuge and strength, our very present help in times of trouble. Whatever may befall us in this life, He desires to assist those who trust Him (1 Peter 5:6,7). When we bring our burdens to Him, we are promised, *"the peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7). Be still, and know that He is God! ✞

Danny Boggs is the preacher for the Hillcrest congregation in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

"…I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9).



The Outstretched Hand of God

Michael L. King

You may have heard the question, "If you feel a distance between you and God, who moved?" We live in a world filled with so many elements of distraction that it often leaves one wondering or feeling as if God no longer knows or cares about us.

Our sins are perceived, by us, to be worse than the sins of any other. We have high and lofty expectations for ourselves, and when we fail to meet those self-imposed objectives, it is easy to become discouraged. We are very familiar with God's attitude toward sin and we sometimes forget that He loves the sinner while abhorring the sin that is committed.

Jesus emphasized during His ministry that His mission was not to

concentrate on those who were righteous, but "*He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick ... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*'" (Matthew 9:12,13).

The burden of proof has never been on God or Jesus as to whether they have the ability to reach man's soul, but on man to comply and respond to their marvelous provisions. Jesus has "*blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3).

Peter echoed the Holy Spirit's sentiments when he promised that "*His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue*" (2 Peter 1:3).

The marvelous grace of God is shown by Paul in his epistle to the Romans. He said, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). Additionally, he notes that "*we are saved from wrath through Him*" (verse 9). This same vicarious death ended the stand-off and separation that had been caused by man's sin toward his God (Isaiah 59:1,2), to be reconciled (resolve, clear up, mend, patch up), and be "*saved by His life*" (Romans 5:10). A primary by-product of this reconciliation is that "*we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (verse 11). It is so wonderful that we have "*such a high priest [Who] was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens*" (Hebrews 7:26).

Israel was like us in that their sins had separated them from God (Isaiah 59:1,2), necessitating intervention from something or someone holy to remove that which was unholy. When Israel was in bondage in Egypt, her cries of deliverance went up to God. In response, God brougth them out, but soon their sinfulness led them to complain about their hardships. God instructed Moses to say to them, "*You have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, 'Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?*'" (Numbers 11:20).

Moses was a bit pessimistic himself and tried to make excuse for those over whom he had leadership responsibilities, but "*the Lord said to Moses, 'Has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not*'" (verse 23).

Isaiah told Israel, "*For your iniquities you have sold yourselves*" (Isaiah 50:1). The Lord observed that when He came, there was no man; when he called, there was no answer. He warned that He could

dry up the sea, make rivers a wilderness, or make the sky turn black (verses 2,3). The Lord asked once again, "*Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?*" (verse 2).

Israel's feelings of being alienated from God were legitimate, but not because of God's failures. "*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But* ***your iniquities*** *have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you*" (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

Our God can meet all of our needs and more! He will not override our will or desire to do so, but wants us to come to Him. Jesus reminds hearers that He is the "*bread of life*" (John 6:35) and whoever comes to Him will never be cast out (verse 37). The burden of proof is placed upon those in need to "*Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened to you*" (Matthew 7:7). The promise in the following verse is that every request will be met. James stated, "*You do not have because you do not ask*" (James 4:2). He cautioned that motives for asking must be pure, for if we plan to spend it on our pleasures, we are asking amiss (verse 3).

Simply, we determine the length to which God will outstretch His arm of love and bounty by our willingness to accept it and comply with His will for us. It is no wonder that the New Testament concluded with an invitation to grasp the outstretched hand of God for forgiveness, friendship, favor, and future blessings. "*And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come.* ***Whosoever desires*** *(emphasis added), let him take the water of life freely*" (Revelation 22:17).

We know that "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promises*" (2 Peter 3:9); therefore, if you feel distanced or "cut out of God's will", who has withdrawn or brought about the disassociation? The distance can be overcome if we are willing to "*... submit to God. Resist the devil and He will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded*" (James 4: 7-9). ✞

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

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

Is Thy God Able?

Tim D. Shoemaker

Daniel had spent the night in the lion's den, but it was king Darius who was unable to sleep in his palace. In Daniel 6:20 we read that very early in the morning Darius came to the den and cried out, "*O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, who thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?*"

The question raised by Darius is one that is still asked by men today. They want to know if the God of the Christian is able today to deliver. Who can blame them, for who wants to serve a God that is unable to help? Such an one would not be the true God, but only an idol (Jeremiah 10:5). However, the answer to their question is a resounding "Yes", for indeed our God is able to deliver.

God is able to save. "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). In the context of this verse the writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ as our High Priest who is superior to all others who served as high priest. All previous high priests had been unable to continue in that office because of death. Jesus is superior because He ever lives to make intercession for us. There is no danger that our High Priest might die and leave us without One to intercede on our behalf for the rest of our journey. Therefore, He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to Him.

In other words, there is full assurance to all Christians that Christ is able to bring about our ultimate salvation in heaven because He is always making intercession for us. Paul, in his letter to the church at Rome, spoke of this great work of Jesus saying, "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*" (Romans 8:33,34).

God is able to keep us. "*For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*" (2 Timothy 1:12). In spite of all that Paul suffered in his service

to Jesus, he was not ashamed, because he had put his full trust in Jesus. He was convinced that Jesus would guard his (Paul's) soul until that day when all men would be rewarded for what they had done in this body. Just as Jesus had committed His spirit to God (Luke 23:46) with the full confidence that God would care for Him, so Paul, in that same assurance of God's ability to guard and protect, committed his soul to God also.

Our Lord is able to help those who are tempted in this life. "*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*" (Hebrews 2:18). The word "succour" is from the Greek word *bonhew* which means "to run to the aid of those who cry for help; to advance to the assistance of anyone…" Because Jesus has undergone temptations like all of us, He is able to help us in our time of temptation. When God chose One to be high priest, the requirement was that that One be understanding of those who came acknowledging their sin and the need for His sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins. Likewise, Christ, as our High Priest, suffered being tempted, that He might be helpful to us when we are tempted. The writer here confirms that He is able to do that. ✞

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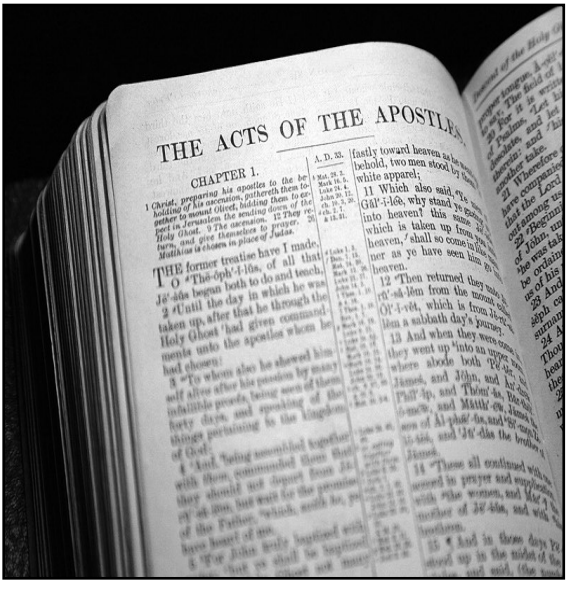
What Does God Think?

It is human nature for us to be concerned to some degree what others think about what we say and do, and even their perception of us. For the most part, we want others to think well **of** us and to speak well **about** us. What is the first thing that comes to mind when we hear one another's names?

What do we think about God and how He thinks and why? Speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said in Luke 16:15, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." The profoundness of that spiritual truth is astounding! Why? Isaiah tells us quite clearly that God does not think the way we do. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:8,9) What God thinks and knows about us matters above all else! **— Marilyn LeStrape**

Truth

Jack W. Carter



Without appealing to Scripture to make my point, I want to say that with all of my heart I believe that our entire relationship with God, including our hope of heaven, depends primarily upon our attitude toward the truth of God's Word.

I feel compelled to mention this as often as possible because it is becoming more and more evident that more and more of us are trifling with truth.

I have come to believe that one of the reasons why this is true is that many of us have not made up our minds about the Bible.

Is it really a reliable book? Is it really the inspired Word of God? Does it mean exactly what it says, or can we disregard some of it? Is it outdated?

Inasmuch as this is the book that tells us about heaven and our eternal destiny, it would seem that we should give our Bibles serious thought and seek to answer all of these questions. However, often we do not! Why? ✞

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**"Sanctify them by Your truth.
Your word is truth" (John 17:17).**

FAITH COMES BY HEARING GOD'S WORD

Jerry A. Jenkins

It has been estimated that 3.1 billion people around the world have never heard the Gospel message of redemption. Half of the world's population has never learned what Jesus did for them at Calvary. Perhaps what is even worse, it has been noted that half of the members of any "Christian" religious group will never read the Bible. Sixty-five percent of those who believe the Bible have never read the entire New Testament.

If these statistics are accurate, one no longer needs to speculate why our world is becoming less and less godly. Some may be awaiting a special outpouring of the Spirit in some miraculous manner upon their lives. This will not happen. The age of spiritual gifts was to end when that which is perfect had come. Paul affirmed, "*Love never fails; but if* [there are gifts of] *prophecy, they will be done away; if* [there are] *tongues, they will cease; if* [there is] *knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away*" (1 Corinthians 13:8 NASB).

That which is perfect refers to the complete revelation from God. James states: "*But whoso looketh into the* ***perfect*** *law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*" (James 1:25 KJV). The New Testament is described as the law of liberty, or freedom, because it is a law producing freedom from the servitude of sinful passions and lusts.

The New Testament is called the law of **liberty** partly because it calls us to a *state* of liberty, teaches us the *way* to true liberty, and offers us the *assistance* of a spirit of liberty. It is called the **law** of liberty partly because it exempts no one, but deals with all persons freely, without respect of persons. The Gospel, or Word of God, then, is truly the world's *law of liberty*.

Your life will be deeply enriched as your faith grows. This faith comes only by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We can change the world with the pure Gospel He has given to mankind. ✞

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Presuppositions and the Bible

Hollis Miller

Jesus believed that men who willingly listened to Him were able to understand His teaching. On more than one occasion He said: "*He that has ears to hear, let him hear*." What else could Jesus have meant than that those who would listen to Him would be able to understand? Yet, many failed to understand because their minds were closed by presuppositions.

As was true during the earthly ministry of Jesus, so it is today. Presuppositions often keep individuals from understanding the Scriptures. One who approaches the Bible under the guidance of Calvinism will not be able to understand the biblical teaching that God would have all men to be saved. Such passages as 1 Timothy 2:4, Hebrews 2:9, and 2 Peter 3:9, which teach that God would have all men to be saved, will be given a different slant from what they "seem" to be saying.

The Jews crucified Jesus because their presuppositions about the nature of the Messiah to come were not met by the Messiah that came (John 1:11). The philosophers at Athens did not listen to Paul very long because of their presupposition that one cannot rise from the dead (Acts 17:32).

So long as one presupposes that salvation is by faith only, the biblical teaching about baptism will not be understood. Should the presupposition that *many faiths can save* reign dominant in one's thinking, the New Testament teaching that there is only one saving faith will not be comprehended (Ephesians 4:5; Acts 4:12). The presupposition that the New Testament is culturally affected will lead one into a more liberal view of its teaching than would otherwise be the case.

When one approaches the Bible, all presuppositions need to be laid aside. The Word of God, which is intended to lead mankind into truth, cannot instruct one as it should so long as one "knows" before investigating what the biblical text says.

Dear reader, let the Word of God, and not presuppositions, guide you. ✞

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Romans 4:9-25

Jerry Bates

1. When was Abraham counted as being righteous? (v. 10)
2. What was the significance of circumcision? (v. 11)
3. Through what was the promise made to Abraham that he would be the heir of the world? (v. 13)
4. Where there is no law there is no _____. (v. 15)
5. The promise comes by _____ and _____. (v. 16)
6. What did God make of Abraham? (v. 17)
7. What two examples does Paul give to show the power of God? (vs. 17-19)
8. What is the meaning of hope? What was the basis of his hope that he would have a child? (vs. 18-20)
9. Of what was Abraham fully convinced? (4:21)
10. What was "accounted to him for righteousness?" (v. 22)
11. Why did Paul write this discussion of Abraham? (vs. 23-24
12. Who or what is the object of our faith? (v. 24)
13. To what does Paul refer when he said that Christ was "delivered up"? (v. 25)
14. How does the resurrection bring justification? (v. 25)

(See inside of back cover for answers.)

Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect. 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 and not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

— Romans 4:9-25, *New King James Version*

Indirect Observation

Kyle Butt, M.A.

The idea often is presented that the creation of the Universe is not "scientific" because such a supernatural Creator cannot be tested using present scientific instruments and procedures. Eugenie Scott, the Executive Director of the National Center for Science Education, avid proponent of evolution and outspoken opponent of creation, has expressed precisely such sentiments: "The ultimate statement of creationism — that the present universe came about as the result of the action or actions of a divine Creator — is thus outside the abilities of science to test" (2004, p. 19). Presumably, because God cannot be "controlled" in an experiment, and because He is a supernatural, non-physical Being, then any information that involves such a God cannot be deemed "scientific".

It is interesting to note, however, that Scott makes some very pertinent admissions when it comes to the ways in which scientists gather data and formulate their theories. In her discussion of data collection, she noted that some scientific data are gathered from indirect observation. She stated:

> In some fields, not only is it impossible to directly control the variables, but the phenomena themselves may not be directly observable. A research design known as *indirect* experimentation is often utilized in such fields. Explanations can be tested even if the phenomena being studied are too far away, too small, or too far back in time to be observed directly. For example, giant planets recently have been discovered orbiting distant stars — though we cannot directly observe them (2004, p. 6, italics in orig.).

She proceeded to suggest that because we know that large planets would have quite a large gravitational pull, and because we see the distant stars "wobble" like they have been pulled by planet gravitation, then we can know that "these planetary giants do exist," and even estimate their sizes.

Let us, then, analyze what Ms. Scott is suggesting: (1) there are some things in this world that we cannot observe directly; (2) we cannot do tests or experiments on the actual object; (3) nor can we see, taste, hear, smell, or touch them, but we can **know** that they exist due to the fact that we can see their effects on things.

One reason Scott is forced to admit the legitimacy of indirect observation is the fact that evolution cannot be tested directly. She admits: "Indeed, no paleontologist has ever observed one species evolving into another, but as we have seen, a theory can be scientific even if its phenomena are not directly observable" (2004, p. 14). According to Scott, we cannot observe evolution in action, per se, but we can look at the effects it has left in the fossil record and other areas and call it a "scientific" discipline.

It may come as quite a surprise to the reader that Ms. Scott's explanation of indirect experimentation is almost identical to the evidence given by the apostle Paul for the existence of an omnipotent Creator: "*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse*" (Romans 1:20). Paul was simply saying that the general population cannot directly observe the Creator, and yet the effects the Creator causes in this observable universe are so directly tied to His omnipotent abilities that those who refuse to recognize His existence are without excuse.

Can we look into this universe and see complex biological machinery that demands a superintending mind? Yes. Can we look at the qualities of matter and energy in relationship to the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics and know that matter cannot be eternal and must have had a starting point? Absolutely. Is it possible to locate irreducibly complex systems in nature that could not have evolved, but must have been designed by an Intelligence that far surpasses any and all human intelligence? Certainly. Then just as surely as Ms. Scott recognizes that much scientific data comes from indirect observation, a rational thinker must admit the possibility and legitimacy of obtaining information about the Creator in the same way.

If we can look at phenomena that we know must be caused by a mind, such as computers, cars, and houses, then we can study the characteristics that show they were caused by a mind and look for those same characteristics in nature. When we do, we find abundant evidence that a Mind must have been involved in the universe to bring about the physical effects that we observe directly. In truth, creation is the most rational, scientific explanation for the material universe we see. ✞

Reference

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Understanding The Bible's Truth About Origins

I have heard it said that "you must have help if you are going to misunderstand the Bible." Indeed, so plain are its teachings on the important points of God's goodness, mercy, and grace, His demand for obedience to the Gospel plan of salvation, that if we want to misunderstand it, we have to work hard or have help to do it.

The same is true for the Bible truths about the origin of everything in the universe. John reveals in Revelation 4:11, "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" That seems like it is pretty plain! Yet, man, in his attempt to come up with a way to avoid the need to render obedience to the teachings in the Bible for pure living, has struggled to invent ways to explain everything without the all-knowing and all-powerful Creator, and many are those who would be happy to help you misunderstand the plain words of God, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and earth*" (Genesis 1:1).

As I begin writing for *The Voice of Truth International* publication, I hope to be able to share some of the truths from the creation that will help to strengthen our faith in the plain teachings of the Bible on the origin of the universe and everything in it. These truths many times will be plain teachings that are revealed by the Holy Spirit through the writers of the Bible.

Sometimes these will be an effort to understand things about the world around us that are not revealed in divine writ and so will be speculation of what God has done. Other times the articles will attempt to explain man's twisting of the discoveries of science to disprove God's majesty and power and, indeed, His existence.

Science is a very rewarding and popular study for mankind. Indeed, the discoveries and advancements of science have improved human life here on earth. However, science is a human endeavor and is influenced by many non-scientific factors around us. Science is defined by the *Oxford University Press* dictionary as the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment, and a systematically organized body of knowledge on any subject.

Science, then, is man's attempt to gain understanding about the universe that God created. Science does NOT prove there is no God; indeed it cannot prove that, since God is a spirit and not observable by physical methods. Science makes no demand that there be no God. Science is God-neutral, neither proving nor disproving His existence. We can use observations from science evidences to support belief of His existence, and others can use [actually, misuse] evidences to conclude that He does not exist.

God has chosen to create us. He revealed Himself to us through His talking with Adam and Eve, and recorded those events for us in His Word, the Bible. When God reveals truth about the physical and natural world, we should take it as the truth! Yet, remember the Bible is NOT a science book! It was not given to reveal how processes in nature work, but since God is the Creator and He understands how the creation works, we should take heed to those teachings and not look for ways we, as fallible humans, might think it is wrong.

Acceptance of the truth of the creation of the world as given in the Bible is a philosophical position, not a scientific one. No one was present at the creation to observe God doing it. God is not, and will not, create something new just to prove His existence! So when it comes to past events, everyone is guessing, albeit some guesses have more evidence and logic that support them. Science, however, can see only what is here NOW and they make hypotheses, build models and speculate about what has happened in the past. If one chooses not to believe the plain truths as revealed in the Bible about God's existence and His creation, then he has taken the other philosophical

position, that of Naturalism. Naturalism is the attempt to explain everything by purely natural processes, with no supernatural intervention at anytime or anywhere.

So, we can see the choices we have: that God has plainly revealed His truths, He created the world, He created the physical laws by which nature operates, He created living things, and He created man in His image. Since that time, other than occasional times to prove His power and majesty, those laws have worked according to His design, and that is what science observes today. *Or,* we can believe that man is the product of natural processes that had no plan and no reason for having man here; we are just matter in motion.

Both of these positions are worldviews that are philosophical, NOT scientific. It is from this position of Naturalism that many today want to reject any evidence from science that supports the idea that there might be a God. When they do this, they reject the plain truth of the Bible and accept the guesses of fallible man who is trying to help them misunderstand these truths.

Let us always be open to God's Word and the truths it reveals about the world around us, and live by that. Then weigh the conclusions of fallible man as he studies science, in light of those plain truths! God has never been proved to be wrong in His Word; we cannot say the same for the scientific community at anytime in mankind's history.

However, when we look at the end result of each of these worldviews, we can see the vast difference. If we accept the biblical and scientific evidence for God's existence and live faithfully for Him, living as good a life as we possibly can, and then die, what have we lost? Are there pleasures in sin we missed? Absolutely there are, or sin would not be so popular, but we have lived a productive, healthy, upright, just, and rewarding life, and then we end in death because God does not exist. In that case, we are just like rover, "dead all over". It is the end, we have lost 70 or 80 years. Yet, if we have lived like there is no God, doing whatever made us feel good because this life is all we have, and an instant after death we wake to realize it was NOT THE END, what have we lost? We have lost everything and are lost for eternity, separated from God with NO chance of an end to the suffering that the Bible tells will be the fate of those "*who obey not the gospel*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

The choice when put like this should be easy! Live for Him! ✞

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The Final Judgment

Albert Gardner

One of the most sobering thoughts that will ever enter our minds is that one day we will face our Maker in judgment. Felix trembled when he heard about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). "*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of these*

things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12).

The books that will be opened are the sixty-six books in our Bible. Those who lived under the Old Testament will be judged by it, and those of us who lived under the New Testament will be judged by it. The "book of life" is God's record book where He writes the names of the faithful. Those whose names are not written there will be cast into "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

In Romans 2, Paul names some characteristics of the final judgment. "*The judgment of God is according to truth*" (verse 2). Nothing but truth, *all the truth* — no evidence will be suppressed. "*Who will render to every man according to his deeds*" (verse 6). There will be none of this "beyond a reasonable doubt" stuff. What we do here will face us there. "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

"*For there is no respect of persons with God*" (Romans 2:11). Rich people will have no advantage over poor people. They cannot buy their way out. Influence by others cannot "throw" the case. There will be no "dream team" for anyone.

"*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel*" (verse 16). The standard by which we will be judged will not be creed books written by men, or which church was the largest, or who was the most popular. Paul says we will be judged by the Gospel.

Those doctrines revealed in the New Testament that many openly reject will be there in the Judgment. Since the Gospel will be the measurement of all human action, don't you think that we should live by it, in this world, in preparation for that final day? It is tragic that some will not accept the Bible on things that really matter. You try to teach, but they will not listen. They read it in the Bible and still they refuse it, so it will take the Final Judgment to convince them. ✞

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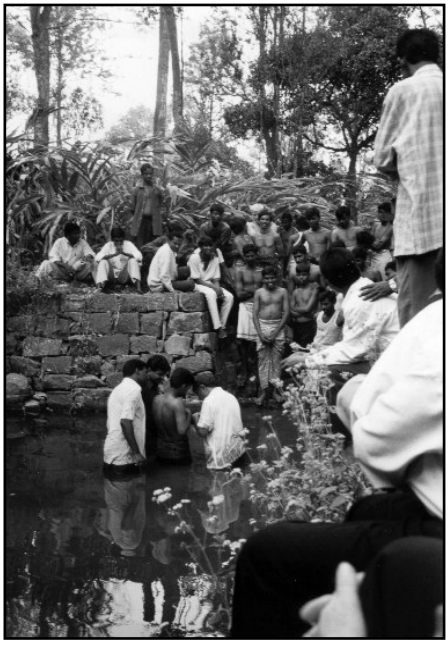
And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.



Baptism and Salvation

Travis L. Quertermous

There is a great deal of controversy in the religious world about baptism. Who should be baptized, when should they be baptized, and why should they be baptized are all questions that have been vigorously debated across the years.

This confusion, however, does not come from the Bible. God's Word is very plain about what baptism is, why it should be administered, and to whom. Consider what Jesus Christ said about baptism in Mark 16:15,16. "*And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned*'."

According to Mark 16:16, the one who believes the Gospel and is baptized as a result will be saved from his sins, but many deny this simple truth. They insist on administering baptism to those who are too young to really believe the Gospel, or else they deny that it has anything to do with salvation.

However, suppose a local car dealership would run this ad, "He who believes and is baptized will receive a new car; he who does not believe will receive nothing." Do you suppose there would be any misunderstanding then? People would be lined up around the block to be baptized! Why, then, deny the plain truth of Mark 16:16? Friends, have you truly been saved? ✞

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Zaitun Ally

Neal Pollard

Her name is "Zaitun Ally" (pronounced ZIGH' TON AH LEE'). I met her on a plane from Amsterdam, Holland, to Arusha, Tanzania, this past spring. She was not the typical Tanzanian. Her father owned several Esso gas stations in and around Arusha. Thus, she had grown up in relative luxury, attending private schools in Tanzania and then college in England at prestigious Cambridge University. She had been living in London, working for Barclays Bank, but she was leaving that life to return to Tanzania. She had expensive, designer clothes, a nifty British accent, and a "high society" cultured refinement that she was able to utilize at sophisticated parties and black tie events.

However, she longed for "home". Home meant a land with sporadic electricity, roads with cavernous potholes or unpaved streets rutted by the rainy season, widespread poverty, many breeds of extremely poisonous snakes and dangerous mammals, and an average life expectancy shortened by widespread disease like AIDS, malaria, typhoid, and yellow fever. She left a high rise suite in a posh neighborhood for a single-floor, modest home in the bush a few miles west of Arusha. All of this was because she longed for home.

Home is as much a concept as a place. It symbolizes far more than it contains. Home encompasses the people, feelings, and memories within it. God created the home as an institution to dispense training (Proverbs 22:6; Luke 2:52; Titus 2:5), provide security (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-6:4), and learn about Him (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4). Time spent and relationships built there stay with us always, if only in recollection.

Jesus taught His disciples about a most special home in John 14:1-5. It is a comforting place ("do not let your heart be troubled"). It is a tangible place ("house"). It is a safe place ("my Father's"). It is an amply spacious place ("are many dwelling places"). It is a prepared place (2, 3). It is an intimate place ("where I am you may be also").

Zaitun longed to return to a place where she had lived at an earlier point in life. We long to live in a home to which we have never been. She looked to exchange the extravagant for the simple. We look

to leave a world of sin, trouble, and difficulty for a perfect place without any of those things. She took what most would consider a step down or backward. In contrast, the journey from earth to heaven will be an infinite improvement (Revelation 21,22).

As I sat next to Zaitun, I admired her willingness to see through material matters and view with more profound depth. What a rare quality! We discussed that heavenly home. Her father is Muslim and her mother is Chaga. She admired Christ, but is not yet a child of God. I pray that Zaitun, and billions like her both near to us and far away, will accept Christ's invitation to come to a home unimaginably better than this one (cf. Revelation 22:14-17). Let us not lose sight of those riches, blinded by these rags. This home is temporary and shabby. That one is eternally permanent and glorious (2 Corinthians 4:16- 5:21). Let us get ready and stay ready to go home! ✞

Neal Pollard is a Gospel preacher working with the Bear Valley church of Christ in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Lord, Prop Us Up

Every time I am asked to pray, I think of the old deacon who always prayed, "Lord, prop us up on our leanin' side." After hearing him pray that prayer many times, someone asked him why he prayed it so fervently. He answered, "Well sir, you see, it's like this. I got an old barn out back. It's been there a long time, it's withstood a lot of weather, it's gone through a lot of storms, and it's stood for many years. It's still standin', but one day I noticed it was leanin' to one side a bit. So, I went out and got some pine poles and propped it up on its leanin' side so it wouldn't fall. Then I got to thinkin' 'bout that and how much I was like that old barn. I been around a long time, I've withstood a lot of life's storms, I've withstood a lot of bad weather in life, I've withstood a lot of hard times, and I'm still standin' too. But I find myself leanin' to one side from time to time, so I like to ask the Lord to prop us up on our leanin' side, 'cause I figure a lot of us get to leanin' at times.

"Sometime we get to leanin' toward anger, leanin' toward bitterness, leanin' toward hatred, leanin' toward cussin', leanin' toward a lot of things that we shouldn't, so we need to pray, 'Lord, prop us up on our leanin' side,' so we will stand straight and tall again, to glorify the Lord."

— Author Unknown

SOMETHING THE CHURCH COULD IMPROVE ON

Chuck Ball

I truly have a love for the Lord's church. I believe with all of my heart that she does her best to uphold Scripture and stand against error. The church does a lot of things right. Is she perfect? Only through the blood of Jesus, because the church is made up of imperfect people, better known as sinners. As the Lord's church, we are striving to be the church we read about in the New Testament. Once again, it is my opinion that we are doing a pretty good job of that.

I have searched and studied, looking for areas in which the church could improve, because it seems that in all facets of life there is always room for improvement. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"* (Acts 2:42). These are four aspects of godly living to which the first Christians were dedicated. I believe that there is no doubt that the Lord's church today is devoted to the apostles' teaching, to the breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), and to prayer. The one thing I question is fellowship. Are we today as devoted to the fellowship of the saints as the early church was?

If there is an area in which the church could improve, I believe it is fellowship. It is a deep devotion to the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ that helps us to develop the family concept. From all I read of the New Testament church, they practiced the family concept as a spiritual way of life, and the church grew by leaps and bounds. *"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread* [not the Lord's Supper] *in their homes, and ate together with glad and sincere*

The congregations that devote themselves to fellowship will develop a love and family concept for one another and will truly experience numerical growth as well as spiritual growth.

hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46-47).

We all lead such busy lives that our practice of meaningful fellowship with other church members suffers. I believe it is the congregations who devote themselves to fellowship, as well as the other three items mentioned in Acts 2:42, that will truly develop a love and family concept for one another and truly experience numerical growth as well as spiritual growth. We make time to fellowship with our physical family members and close friends. Because of that, our love for them and our relationship with them deepens. The Lord's church will benefit greatly if all her congregations become devoted to the fellowship of the saints. This may seem like a basic principle, because it is, but I believe it is a basic principle that we should all take very seriously. Let each one of us do our part to be more devoted to the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ. ✝

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The Light Beyond

Vi B. Chevalier

When somber clouds of steely grey
Cast shadows o'er your heart and way,
Look up, beyond the darkened sky,
Where tints of blue will soon drift by.

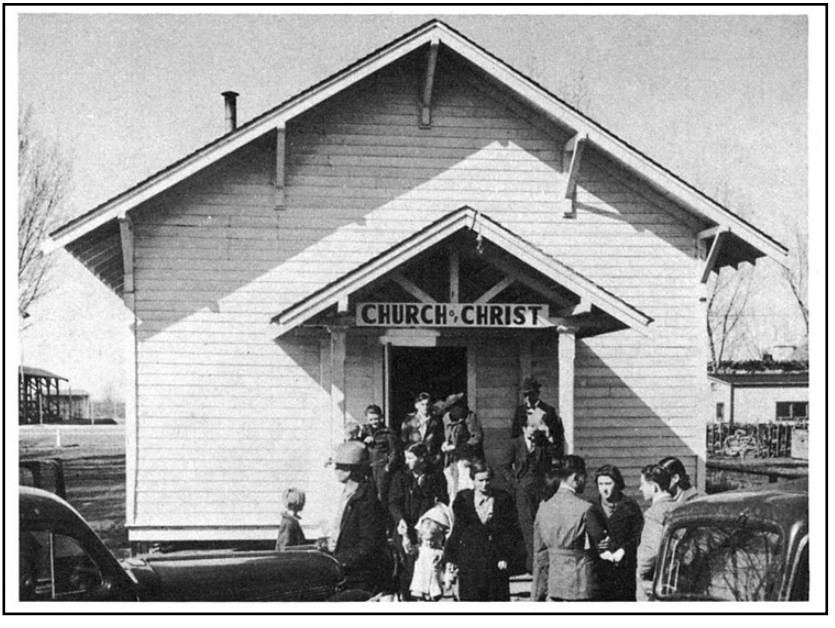
Look up and know that in God's plan
No sparrow falls nor, too, a man
Without His watch, without His love.
Have faith, believe, trust Him, above.

For from the dark is born the light,
A ray of hope, a beacon bright
To warm your heart and help you through.
Rejoice and know God's there with you.

The Importance of the Church That Jesus Built

Perry Cotham

Caesarea Philippi was a city literally founded upon a rock. It was in that vicinity that Jesus asked His disciples, "*Who do men say that the Son of man is?*" (Matthew 16:13). Various answers were given. Some were saying that He was John the Baptist, risen from the dead; others thought of Him as Elijah; and still others said He was Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Then the Lord put the question directly to the disciples: "*But who say ye that I am?*" (Matthew 16:15). Then Peter made a most noble confession of his faith: "*Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God*". Many things led Peter to this conclusion. He had seen the miracles of our Lord, thrilled to His matchless discourses, and beheld His perfect life. Peter must have spoken the sentiments of all the other apostles, for none contradicted him.



Following Peter's confession of faith in Him as God's Son, Jesus said: "*Blessed are thou Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Matthew 16:17-19 ASV).

This is a most significant passage of Scripture; note some clearly suggested truths about it.

The Church Was Founded by Christ

The first truth studied is that the church of the New Testament was built by Jesus Christ Himself. To the apostles, Christ promised, "I will build My church." The church founded by Christ is a divine organism and is in faith, doctrine, organization, worship, unity, and terms of membership just what the Lord would have it to be. In this respect, the church is perfect and cannot be improved. Thus, in establishing His church, the original and true church, He showed that no one ever had divine authority to originate a church.

When Christ spoke of building the church, He used a possessive term, "My church". The church is, therefore, Christ's church, or the church of Christ, because He built it. Again, the church belongs to Christ because He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27). When Paul spoke of various congregations of the Lord's church, he once said, "*The churches of Christ...*" (Romans 16:16).

Grammatically, the expression "the church of Christ" is not a title; it is simply a descriptive term indicating the fact that the church is the possession of Christ — that is, a prepositional phrase denoting ownership of the church. It is the same, therefore, as saying Christ's church.

The Church Is the Saved

When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," just what did He have in mind to establish? The Bible, in answering this question, uses several designations in speaking of the institution or organism known as the Lord's church.

1. If the church is viewed from the standpoint of its relationship to the world, it is called the "church", this means the "called out", or those who are distinct from the world, having been called by the Gospel (John 15:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14).

2. If the church is viewed from the standpoint of its government, it is properly called the "kingdom", with Christ the absolute king and all departments of government (legislative, judicial, and executive) vested in him (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:24,25). "Church" and "kingdom" are used by Christ in Matthew 16:18,19 in reference to the same institution (cf. Luke 22:29,30; 1 Corinthians 11:20; Hebrews 12:23,28). To be in the church of Christ is to be in the kingdom of Christ.
3. If the church is spoken of from the standpoint of its organization, it is called the "body", with Christ as the head and all Christians members of this one body (Romans 12:4,5).
4. If this institution is viewed from the standpoint of a family, it is called the "house of God", or the family of the Lord, with all of God's children being members of this family, the church (1 Timothy 3:15; Romans 8:14-17).
5. If the church is described from the standpoint of its worship, it is properly called the "temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5). The church is not a material building, or the meeting house (Acts 7:48; 17:24). It is a spiritual temple, for God dwells in this building and is worshiped there. In the New Testament the word "church" never refers to a material building.
6. If the organism is viewed in reference to its relationship to Christ, it is the bride of Christ, and individual members wear His name (Ephesians 5:23-32; Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

One can understand why the same institution is referred to by several designations, for a man can be a brother, a husband, a lawyer, a citizen, a Christian, and a father. He is one man, yet considered from six different relationships. ✞

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"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you" (Romans 16:16)

On Preaching the Gospel

Bill Nicks

A preacher of the Gospel must consider whom he is teaching. On Pentecost, Peter was preaching to Jews who heard his message and believed (Acts 2:37), thus were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). At the house of Cornelius, he preached to Gentiles who believed in God (10:2) and needed to hear about Christ. Paul preached to the jailer, a pagan who needed to have the Word spoken to him from the very rudiments about God and Christ (16:32). He preached to the philosophers on Mars Hill about the true and living God, different from the mythical gods they worshipped, and he included teaching about the resurrection, which they did not believe, then closed with the necessity of repentance in view of Christ being the judge (Acts 17:22-31). In every case, Christ must be preached in His fullness. The Gospel always includes Jehovah God of the Old Testament, whose prophets told of the Messiah's coming, the Christ who came and fulfilled the prophetic utterances, and the Spirit who revealed the truth of Christ through the apostolic Gospel.

The Gospel includes:

1. **Facts to be believed:** the preexistence of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11), His virgin birth (Matthew 1:21-25), His miracles (John 20:30f, His parables and other teachings in the Gospel accounts, and His revelation by the Holy Spirit to the apostles as recorded in the epistles. Such themes as redemption, justification, reconciliation, and sanctification must be included in the Gospel that is preached. The central facts of the Gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:4; Acts 2:22-32; 17:1-4).
2. **Commands to be obeyed:**

   (1) Faith in God and Christ (Hebrews 11:1,6; Romans 10:17; John 6:29; 8:21-24; Romans 5:1f).

   (2) Repentance which is genuine, that is, a change of mind that leads to a change in conduct (Acts 11:18; 17:30f; Luke 13:5; 2 Corinthians 7:9f).

   (3) Confession of faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32f; Acts 8:37; 1 Timothy 6:12).

   (4) Baptism, a burial in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15f; Matthew 28:19f; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-5).

(5) After baptism, one is added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47), then the child of God must be obedient to the second principles that are designed to build him up "*on his most holy faith*" (Jude 20). This includes adding the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5-11) in preparation for entrance into the eternal kingdom.

3. Promises to be trusted: One must believe that God will do what He has promised:

(1) That He will grant remission of sins to the obedient (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 13:38f).

(2) That He will continue to apply the cleansing blood of Christ to the child of God who repents, prays, and confesses sins (1 John 1:7-10; 2:1f; James 5:16).

(3) That He will grant us His Holy Spirit to abide with us in the ordinary way that He helps all Christians through the Word of God, the product of the Spirit, giving us blessings, comforts, and seasons of refreshing (Acts 3:19; 1 Corinthians 6:19f; Galatians 4:6).

(4) That He will give us at the last day life eternal with all the redeemed, and that we will see Jesus face to face (1 John 2:25; Revelation 2:10; 1 John 3:1-4). ✞

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Satan's Beatitudes . . . .

★ Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians. They are my best workers.

★ Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked.

★ Blessed are those who seek worldly pleasures instead of seeking the will of God. As "representatives" of Christ, they are my missionaries.

★ Blessed are the troublemakers. They shall be called my children.

★ Blessed are those who murmur and complain and have no joy. They make my work of discouragement easy.

★ Blessed are those who gossip, for they shall cause the division God hates and I love.

★ Blessed are those who are easily offended. They will soon quit.

★ Blessed is he who professes to love God but hates his brother. He shall be with me forever.

God's Love Compels Us

R.H. Tex Williams

Anyone who has spent any time reading the Bible cannot help but be moved by the love and personal concern that God has for all of His creation! The amazing statement made by Jesus in Matthew 10:29,30 is evidence of God's extensive love to birds as well as to mankind: "*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny. Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered*".

Though God is concerned for all of His creation, man is the focal point of His greatest love. The first mention of God's love in the Bible is expressed in the song of Moses and Miriam following Israel's deliverance from the Egyptian armies at the Red Sea. "*In your unfailing love you will lead the people you redeemed*" (Exodus 15:13). The second time God's love is mentioned in the Bible was when the Ten Commandments were given and God is presented as punishing those who would worship graven images. However, his statement "*…showing love to a thousand generations of those that love me and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:6), is evidence of His great love for all men. This declaration is also a positive identification of the recipients of that gift; that is, it is for those who return His love by keeping His commandments.

"*Love your neighbor as yourself…*" (Mark 12:31).

That does not mean that God's love is limited to only those who know Him and who keep His commandments. His love is universal, and His purpose is to let His love be known. That is why He sent Jonah to Nineveh to preach against their sins. In spite of Jonah's negative feelings, his preaching was successful. The people repented and God's delight in the results was evident. "*When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring the destruction he had threatened.*" He explained why He was concerned about Nineveh: "*But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left and many cattle*

as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city."

Note the expanse of God's feelings for a people who did not know Him, and even to the cattle as well. Then, of course, Jonah finally verbally recognizes God's purpose in sending him to a foreign people to preach repentance. "*I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity...*"

The universality of God's love is emphatically expressed in the familiar passage of John 3:16: "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"

As God loves us, so are we to love as well. In Mark 12:28-31, we are made aware that the most important commandment is "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart...*" The second most important commandment is "*Love your neighbor as yourself...*". This is the love that compels us to reach out to others, as God's love reaches out to us.

Let me illustrate this principle using an experience that I had as a missionary in Africa. I was preaching over a short wave radio station that reached all of southern and central Africa. Due to so many requests, I sent out copies of the sermons to a wide audience. I received a letter from a Zulu man, John Gomede, who lived in Zululand and who had picked up one of my printed sermons off of a dirt road. He stated that a truck had run over the sermon and he could not read all of it, but was able to read enough to feel he needed to know more. My address was still readable, and he asked me to come to his home and preach. I was glad to comply and had a vague idea of where he lived and finally found his home.

I was not welcome by the animistic people who lived in that area, and they threw rocks at my car whenever I came to John's home. Over a period of time, John and his family were converted, but he suffered the consequences of his conversion. His neighbors killed his chickens and goats and pulled up the corn, pumpkins, etc. that grew in his garden. I suggested that he move from such a hostile environment, but he loved his kinsmen and neighbors and so he endured and preached. Today, because of his love, there are now 14 congregations of the Lord's church in his immediate and the surrounding areas. His love was compelled by God's love — and it produced fruit. So can it be with us, if we love as God loves. ..... ✞

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A Preview of Judgment

Wayne Barrier

The Bible provides much teaching that will prepare us for God's judgment following the Second Coming of Christ. The Scripture warns man that he must be ready for this event. Notice Paul's teaching to the residents of ancient Greece as he preaches in Acts 17, stating in verses 29-31,

> *Therefore since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead.*

These verses confirm that a date has been set by God for the judgment of all men to occur. As surely as we are created in God's image and as surely as Jesus was raised from the dead, a judgment day has been appointed. We need to be ready.

Preparation must be made in this life. Consider Hebrews 9:27,28 as the writer states, "*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin for salvation.*" Luke provides some information about the condition and state of man immediately following death, prior to judgment. Read Luke 16:19-31. Two men die and are immediately described as being in two different places. The rich man is in a place of torment. He asks for help and is told it is impossible for his state to change. His eternal destiny is set. He asks if someone can go back to warn his brothers and is told that this, too, is impossible. The poor man, Lazarus, is in the other place. This place is described as Abraham's bosom where he is comforted. Both await judgment and cannot change their destiny.

Jesus provides another judgment preview in Matthew 25:31-46, as He says,

> *When the Son of Man comes*

in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to see me.'

Then the righteous will answer Him saying, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?'

And the king will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me.' Then he will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

Then they also will answer Him saying, 'Lord when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you?'

Then he will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it unto me.'

And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Judgment will come after death, which is certain. Our destiny is determined as we live, and cannot change after our death. There are only two places for life after judgment — eternal life or everlasting punishment. Jesus tells us how to prepare. We must obey and follow Him. ✝

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The Christian and the Church

Julene Nulph

Think in your mind of someone you love very deeply. This someone is extra special to you. You love to spend time with this person and would do anything for him/her. Isn't that right? Now let's say that there was going to be a gathering to honor this special someone of yours. Would you be there? Certainly, you would! Morning, noon or night you would make certain to do whatever was needed to arrive at this honorary gathering of your special loved one.

Now let's say this someone you love very deeply is Jesus, and the gathering to honor Him is when the saints assemble. Are you there?

Erroneously, some believe one can be a faithful Christian without the church. The Hebrews writer stated Christians are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some (Hebrews 10:25). Through inspiration, the message clearly states Christians are not to skip the worship, Bible classes and gathering of other Christians like some people were doing. Acts 2:42 says of the first century Christians, "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*."

> "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

These Christians were faithful in hearing the preaching and teaching of the apostles, in fellowshipping with one another, taking the Lord's Supper and praying. The idea of *steadfastly* here means "to give constant attention to a thing" (Thayer, 547). Inspiration records the frequency of that constant attention: "*On the* ***first day of the week*** *when the disciples came together to break bread...*" (Acts 20:7a).

The Christians came together on the first day of the week. One man didn't worship at home alone

in his corner and another man worship in his corner. They worshiped together as a group. That group of believers was the church. "For the purpose of being taught by the apostles, they [the church, JRN] must have assembled together, and this as the occasion for manifesting their fellowship, which term expresses their common participation in religious privileges" (McGarvey, 47).

What else did these followers of Christ Jesus do together as a group on the first day of the week? They partook of the Lord's Supper. In Matthew 26:26-30, Jesus instituted His memorial supper with the whole group of apostles present. He did not introduce this supper to Peter and then show Andrew later. No, this was a group memorial. In Acts 20:7 we read, "*…when the disciples* ***came together*** *to break bread…*" (emp. added). After Jesus ascended to Heaven, the disciples were still meeting together as a group, the church, to partake of the Lord's Supper, in the same manner that Jesus had taught them to do.

We read in 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 that on the first day of the week Christians need, again, to come together to "*lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*" This passage deals with the collection of the saints and substantiates the fact that each Christian is to set aside a certain amount of money that he is able to give to the

church treasury each first day of the week. "All church history testifies that the early church took up weekly collections on the first day of the week" (Johnson, 126).

Some people are able to give more money than others, due to their having more money. One knows if he/she is truly giving what he/she could and, more importantly, God knows if one is being stingy or generous in his/her giving. God knows not only what man *does*, but also what he *thinks* (cf. Luke 16:15). Notice that this giving is to be done on the first day of the week.

The first day of the week is recorded in the Holy Bible as a special day for Christians. It was the day on which the church assembled and, in that assembly, they worshipped God by: teaching and preaching (cf. Acts 2:42), giving as they prospered (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2), partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-30), singing and making melody in their hearts (Ephesians 5:19), and praying (1 Timothy 2:8). They assembled to do these things together, as a group called the church, as Christ Jesus taught. This was Christ's church, not a denomination, but a possession! This was and is the church belonging to Christ (i.e. the church of Christ, cf. Matthew 16:18,19; Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18, et al). This same body of believers still assembles on the first day of the week to worship God. If one neglectfully skips the assembly, how can he honestly say he loves Jesus (cf. John 14:15)? If one is not at this assembly, how can a person properly give as he has been prospered, take the Lord's Supper or obey Hebrews 10:25?

I once heard an old song that had these lyrics: "Love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage … you can't have one without the other." The same is true with a Christian and the church; you just can't have one without the other! ✞

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Is it your practice to keep spiritual appointments, or to break them?

Thoughtful Prayers at the Lord's Supper

Maxie B. Boren

Through the years we've all heard prayers worded at the Lord's Table that are less meaningful than what they should be. It is my conviction that if brethren are taught better, the quality of such prayers can be improved. Surely all Christians would agree that our worship to God is of profound importance, and we should want it to be pleasing to God and spiritually uplifting to those assembled. Jesus taught that *"the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23). A significant part of our worship is the partaking of the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted *"the supper"* (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20), and it was observed by the first century Christians on the *"Lord's day"* (Acts 20:7). The apostle Paul wrote concerning it in language that impresses us with the importance of its proper observance (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). We must not do so thoughtlessly or carelessly, but thoughtfully, sincerely, and reverently! The following is lovingly submitted for brethren's careful consideration:

1. Prayers of those presiding at the Lord's Supper should be addressed to God the Father, thanking Him for His infinite love and grace in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16), who gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews l9:24-26). Remember, it was **Jesus** who gave His body and shed His blood on the cross, *not* **God the Father** (see Matthew 27:27ff; Mark 24:53ff; Luke 23:13ff; John 19:17ff). Therefore, it is erroneous to thank God for "Thy body" and "Thy blood". God is a spirit (John 4:24), and a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). It was the Word (Jesus Christ) who came to earth in bodily form, and gave His body and shed His blood as an atonement for us (read Philippians 2:6-8; John 1:1-4; 14; Hebrews 2:14, 17; 9:26; 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 4:2, 9-10; Romans 5:8; Galatians 1:4 etc).
2. Prayers offered at the Lord's Table should not be what might be called "prayers of general thanksgiving" that would be more appropriate at other times in the worship. These prayers should be expressions of gratitude for the body and blood of Jesus, offered freely in our behalf! In this connection, let me point out what is commonly worded … thanks

for "the bread" and for the "fruit of the vine", oftentimes with no mention of the body and blood of Christ. **Think!** Is it the literal bread and literal grape juice for which we are thankful? The bread and grape juice only represent or symbolize the body and blood of Christ. Then why not word our prayers accordingly?

In conclusion, we all need to give a lot of thought to our observance of the Lord's Supper. And in a very particular way, the men who preside at "the table" should give careful thought in wording prayers that are appropriate and heartfelt. ✞

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WORSHIP

Worship is the Christian's spiritual vitality. Worship is to the soul what bread is to the body. In periods of praise to God we are renewed and rededicated to high aims and holy purposes. Worship tempers us against evils in the time yet to come.

In the difficult business of daily living, worship enables us to seek a source of strength outside ourselves. It causes us to be humbled by thoughts of the majesty and immensity of God. Worship helps us to keep life in proper focus and saves us from drowning in puddles of pettiness.

One of the finest statements ever made on the value of attending worship services came from a grief-stricken father whose oldest son had been killed in a traffic accident. Funeral services were conducted, and the two remaining small brothers, with their heart-broken parents, proved themselves equal to the terrible challenge of sudden tragedy. The following Sunday, the family was first to arrive at the church building. Their faces bore the shadows and strains of the deep grief through which they were passing, but the father explained, "We're here today because we couldn't think of a better place to be!"

The father was right. Worship gives comfort as we lay the weight of sorrow and of every problem at the feet of God!

The very observance of the first day of the week is a shining memorial of the Lord's resurrection and His triumph over death. Guilt, grief, and the grave are vanquished in the brightness and glory of the Lord's victory. This fact alone is enough to dry every tear on the earth!

Singing in Worship to God

Ron Bryant

True religion is the true worship and service of God, learned from the Word of God, and based upon that Word alone. No man or angel could know how God is to be worshipped and served, apart from Scripture. God has revealed His will for our lives in His Holy Book. We now look to the New Testament, the Gospel of God's Son, as our guide. That guide strictly states the necessity of abiding in the will of God, revealed in Christ, and of rejecting any addition to it or subtraction from it.

The first Christians were guided by the truth revealed to the apostles of Jesus. In worship, they praised God in song and did not use mechanical instruments of music. Christian music was vocal and verbal. The singing was "a cappella", a Latin term that literally means "as done in the church" — vocal and verbal — unaccompanied singing. Throughout church history, from the beginning, the practice was vocal music only. A cappella music has been a common ground — something everyone agrees is right and scriptural. People who are serious about living by the Word of God, and following it faithfully in worship and service, readily abandon that which the New Testament does not authorize. No one has ever suggested that *a cappella* music was wrong, while the use of *mechanical instruments* has divided believers every time it is introduced.

The historical record, both sacred and secular, establishes the fact that Christianity is a singing faith! It is a historical fact that mechanical instruments of music were introduced into Christian worship, not by the apostles, but by uninspired men no earlier than the seventh century. In fact, many conservative scholars suggest that they were not introduced until the eleventh century.

Why sing? Why exclusively use a cappella music in praise of God? First, a cappella music is fully consistent with the nature of Christian worship. Worship is offered to God. The goal of worship is not personal fulfillment or aesthetics. The fundamental matter is to offer **praise to God.** Therefore, worship is ruled by what is spiritual, rational, and verbal as it is offered to God. God is praised. Praise, as worship, is rooted in our relationship with God, and is expressive of a holy relationship, therefore nothing

artificial is offered to Him. In keeping with the Word of God, we simply and earnestly seek to "*offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name*" (Hebrews 13:15).

Secondly, Christian worship is **spiritual worship**. "*God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). God's people exist to "*offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 2:5). Worship is to come from the spirit of man. The spiritual is the opposite of the sensual. Worship is to be offered with the mind and the heart. Praise flows from the mind and the heart and through the voice to God. Therefore, we endeavor to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (cf Colossians 3:16).

Thirdly, worship also serves to **edify.** Singing is not just praise, it is also teaching and admonishing. It must build up, improve, and teach. What goes on in worship must instruct, inform, and edify the church, the body of believers. Therefore, what is done must be intelligible and understandable. Paul wrote, "*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also*" (1 Corinthians 14:15). We sing and pray to God, communing and communicating not just feelings, but thoughts and desires. We teach and admonish one another; and therefore, edify one another.

Who is spiritually instructed by mere *sounds?* The *words* of spiritual songs build us up in faith as we speak forth — sing forth — praise to God. No one questions the propriety of doing that which God has authorized. Only those who have no allegiance to God readily seek to exalt their will and desire above His.

Quite simply, we sing in our worship, a cappella style, because that is what God commanded us to do in the New Testament. We sing praise to God because we are committed to following His will as our only authority. We reject the use of mechanical instruments of music because we do not want to be guilty of adding to the word of God. We reject unscriptural additions and consistently worship in song, singing praise to Him, offering unto Him the worship He desires. We seek to honor the words of the inspired penman, "*By Him* [Christ] *therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name*" (Hebrews 13:15). ✞

Ronald D. Bryant preaches for the Lord's church in Metropolis, Illinois, USA.

Worship Posture

Bobby Wheat

There is hardly a religious discussion taking place today that doesn't somehow get around to worship. People want to talk about worship styles and worship language. They discuss worship focus and worship benefits. Let me throw in another element for consideration — worship posture.

You might think that my concern is mundane. After all, we know that worship can take place according to any "posture". We can stand, we can sit, we can even kneel, but that's not really the kind of posture that concerns me when it comes to worship. Here are a few points concerning worship posture that might help us the next time we come before God to bring Him praise.

Sit Up. Yes, this relates to physical posture, but perhaps it relates more to attitude than you may realize. If a person slouches in the seat, what is conveyed is, at the least, a casual attitude that says, "This activity is no more important to me than reclining in front of the TV." Taken further, though, it may

reflect disrespect, disregard, even disdain for the activity, and more seriously, the object of worship — God, Himself. So, when you engage in worship, *sit up*, and show yourself to be serious about what you are doing. God's requirement of man, in reference to Himself is worded in Leviticus 10:3: *"By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified."*

Open Up. Worship is expressed verbally, so *open* your **mouth** to sing. Worship is an activity that should engage our thought processes, so *open* your **mind** to what is being said and done. Worship is intended to involve, even to capture our souls, our innermost existence, so *open* up your **heart** to be moved by reflection on what God has done for man (John 4:22-24).

Look Up. Biblical worship has a proper object and direction. Whether we do so physically or not, at least in our minds, we should be *looking up* to the God of Heaven as we worship. It's a little difficult to be *looking* where we should during worship if we are mentally looking over today's lunch menu, or tonight's TV schedule, or tomorrow's work routine.

Consider, too: When you worship, is your concentration within your own head, focused on your own thoughts, and on yourself, or do you project your focus outside yourself, and to God instead?

Offer Up. The Hebrews writer's admonition is that we *"offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15). In worship, we offer up to God all that we are, all that we have, for the pleasure of the One Who created us. It is in worship where I properly recognize that I belong to God, and in worship where I repeatedly submit myself to His will.

When next we come together, let's adopt the proper posture, making our worship everything that God deserves it to be. ✞

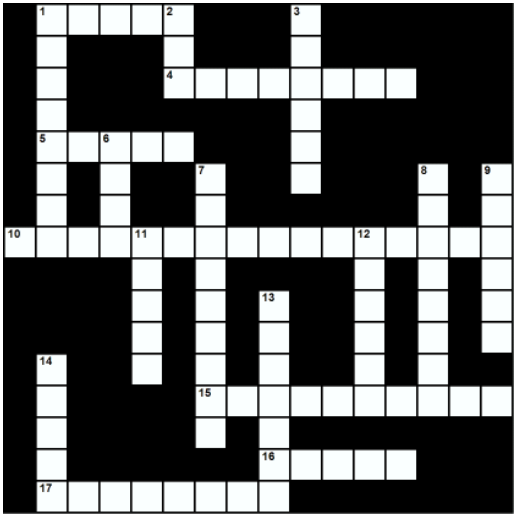
Bobby Wheat, former missionary to Zimbabwe, preaches for the Lord's church in Winfield, Kansas, USA.

The prayers a man lives on his feet are just as important as those he says on his knees.

BIBLE FIND

Bonnie Rushmore

I Have Sinned



Across

1. Who said “I have sinned” (Matthew 27:3-4)?
4. How many times does the Bible state “I have sinned”?
5. To whom did the Israelites say “I have sinned” (Numbers 21:7)?
10. Who said “I have sinned” (Judges 10:10)? (three words)
15. Who said “I have sinned” (Numbers 14:40)?
16. Who said “We have sinned” (Numbers 12:11)?
17. Who said “We have sinned” (Nehemiah 1:6)?

Down

1. Who said “We have sinned” (Jeremiah 3:25)?
2. Who said “I have sinned” (Luke 15:11-18)?
3. To whom did David say “I have sinned?
6. Who said “I have sinned” (1 Samuel 15:24)?
7. How many times does the Bible state “we have sinned”?
8. Who said “I have sinned” (Psalm 41:4)?
9. Who said “I have sinned” (Numbers 22:34)?
11. Who said “I have sinned” (2 Samuel 12:13)?
12. To whom did Saul say “I have sinned”?
13. Who said “I have sinned” (Exodus 10:16)?
14. Who said “I have sinned” (Joshua 7:20)?

I Found a Better Way

Randy English

Each day, Monday through Friday, I go to M. D. Anderson Cancer Center to receive a radiation treatment. At first I drove, but then I found a better way — a convenient, fast shuttle to the clinic!

The M.D. Anderson Cancer Center is a huge place and has many different areas. Finding the right location can be confusing at times. To get to the radiation check-in area, at first I walked a long distance inside the clinic with many confusing turns, often ending up in the wrong area. Then, I found a better way — a sure way that saved me time and got me to the right place! After checking in, I would then go to a waiting room, one of many that are specifically for people receiving radiation.

It's here that God blesses me to meet lots of people, all with different types of cancer.

At first, I would go to the waiting room and just sit. Then I found a better way — I go to the waiting room and sit and visit with people. It's here that God blesses me to meet lots of people, all with different types of cancer. My wait is usually not too long, and then I go into a room with a huge IMRT radiation machine, remove my shirt and shoes, and then lie down on a table surrounded by lots of lights. After placing a stint into my mouth, the therapist locks down a mask to fix the position of my face and head.

At first I felt really pinned down and it made the treatments difficult, but then I found a better way — since my head is in a fixed position, I decided to just close my eyes and fix my mind upon Jesus! As each treatment is completed, I am now beginning to experience some of the side effects. Even so, as the difficulties come, I am encouraged that God is truly helping me — *to find a better way*!

People ask questions. What have you been asked lately? Have you been asked, "How was your day?" Was there an opportunity for God in your answer? About two weeks ago, en route to M.D. Anderson, I got to meet a very kind woman. In fact, she helps to operate a shuttle that goes back and forth to the clinic, so I've been seeing her about every 3rd or 4th day during the week. Each time I see her I take the opportunity to bring up something about God and His ways.

Last week, on Monday, it happened that I was the only one on the shuttle when she asked me the question, "Did you have a good day yesterday?" The day, of course, that she was referring to was Sunday! I responded by saying, "Absolutely, in fact, I had a great day!" She replied, "Why was it a great day, Mr. English?"

I told her that my day was great because it began by assembling with other Christians and worshipping God. I told her about the very encouraging Bible class we had attended, and that it was enthusiastically presented according to the Bible.

I then went on to describe the worship assembly and how that all things were conducted in a manner that was indeed pleasing to God. I

told her about the unusual kindness that was shown to our family, from the moment that we walked into the building right up to the time when we departed.

I could tell that her interest was growing, but the minutes had passed by quickly and it was now time for me to get off the shuttle. She looked up in the rear view mirror and I could see that she was smiling and was interested in my explanation about "that day". I truly hoped I would see her again.

You can imagine how happy I was as, this week, I again got on the crowded shuttle, and there in the driver's seat was my new friend with whom I had shared my joy about "that day". I said, "Hello, it's great to see you again", and she greeted me with a big smile and a friendly, "Hello, Mr. English, you too."

Because there were a good number of people on the bus, I had to move farther toward the back, which kept me from speaking with her. However, all of a sudden, she looked up in the rear view mirror, and with all the people on the bus listening, the woman spoke up and said, "Mr. English, when you go back to services next Sunday, would you mind writing down the lesson for me so I can study the Scriptures?" I told her, "I will be most happy to do this for you!"

Later, as I thought to myself about what a great blessing and opportunity this was, I have to admit that I also wondered if the sermon presented at the congregation where we will attend on this coming Sunday will be given on a topic that will help this woman learn about salvation. This was in no way a negative implication on what that morning's message might be. As we all know, there are many topics for sermons, some of which do not directly address the subject of salvation. Still, I was thinking, "Will the lesson help my new friend to learn of salvation?"

Not doubting that God would provide, I purposed to take detailed notes on the sermon and then share them with our new friend. This great opportunity had occurred simply because this woman had asked about my day, and when she did, I was prepared to share with her why my day was great! So, the next time you're asked the question, "How was your day?" find a way to glorify God!

Closing note: The sermon on which I took extensive notes to share with our new friend was on the subject of "Do You Know Whether or Not You Are Saved?" God has again provided! ✞

Randy English is a missionary in Pago Pago, American Samoa, and has undergone cancer treatment in Houston, Texas, USA.

How to Build and Maintain a Missionary Church

Robert H. Martin

The New Testament teaches us that the purpose of the church is to support the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Lord's church must always keep its mission in mind (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). Worldwide missions begin at our own door and reach as far as we are able to reach (Acts 1:8). Local work and local outreach continue, while we must also be reaching out to the challenge of mission work in foreign lands.

How Can We Continually Build a Missionary Church?

The leadership and preachers must believe the Great Commission and have a worldwide vision. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, "*Go and make disciples of all nations,*" and Mark 16:15 tells us, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*." It takes good leadership and pulpit work to build a good mission program.

Make Definite Plans for Mission Work. In Acts 13:1-3, the church at Antioch made definite plans with dedication and commitment to send Paul and Barnabas out on that first missionary trip. Continual planning makes for a more continually effective mission program. Those of action are those who plan. The future belongs to those who dream and plan for the Lord.

Bible School and Teaching Program. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus tells us that our work is a continual process of teaching all things to those who are baptized believers, and this includes the *mission* of the church. Making

worldwide evangelism a part of our teaching program at least once a year will ensure that the children growing up will continue to carry on that work. Teachers, put up visual aids to encourage the mission of the church, and have class projects of writing and giving to missionaries.

Training for the Congregation. We must continually commit the evangelism of the church to others and train those who are faithful Christians (2 Timothy 2:2). Let us plan now to attend forums and workshops that will help to place greater emphasis on and prolong our mission efforts. The Lord needs all of us to hold up the arms of those who are directly involved in the great work of the church. Other ways that we can train are Mission Emphasis Weekends, VBS, and Great Commission Meetings for three days.

Have Your Missionaries Before the Congregation as Often as Possible. In Acts 14:26-28, when Paul had finished that first missionary trip, he returned to Antioch and "*reported all that God had done with them*". This will stimulate the congregation to really be involved in mission work. It will give the members a better insight into evangelism at home and abroad.

A congregation carrying out the mission of the Lord does not just happen. It takes vision, teaching, planning, and a lot of hard work continually to develop and maintain a **MISSIONARY CHURCH**. ✞

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

Just One Caring Soul

Ardron Hinton

When your small corner of the earth
Lies draped by darkness like a shroud
When all the night guides of the sky
Hide behind a wall of stormy cloud,
What a great difference could be made
By one kind soul from the passing crowd.

A little light for the unknown path ahead
Could save from falling or from straying.
A voice could break the gloom of night
With the kind and thoughtful words for saying.
A note of hope to counter dark despair,
With words of faith to use in fear's allaying.

The light for the path need not be bright,
Just enough to see where the path may go.
The spoken words need not be fine and grand,
Just say enough to help weak faith to grow.
Great talent is not required in this work,
Just love and faith and hope you can bestow.

Christians, into All the World. . .

Steven B. Choate

My father-in-law, Charles Salmon, has led a group from Naples Church of Christ, his home congregation, to the mission field of Ghana for the last ten years or so. He believes strongly in confirming all Christians in their faith through active evangelical effort, is a great advocate for the receptivity of the Ghanaian people to the Gospel, and has, for many years, encouraged our participation in his mission trips. On this occasion, our daughter, Erin, and I said yes.

All participants were asked to develop, prior to departure, at least three lessons, simple in language, emphasizing the Gospel message, what Bro. Charles calls "the laws of love, sin and death". Typically, the members of the projected group meet for months in advance of the trip, reviewing their lessons following the constructive criticisms of brother Charles and other, experienced group members.

Our contact person in Ghana was brother Christian Nsoah. Along with his wife, Lizzie, who cooked for our team, brother Christian was an exemplary host and guide during our month-long effort.

Our first area of work was the regional capital of Kete-Krachi. brother Christian took out a group in his truck every morning to work in the surrounding villages, teaching and preaching. They would generally return sometime in the late afternoon to join us for the evening meal. The rest of us stayed at the house teaching in seminar meetings brother Mark had organized to strengthen the local church members, as most of these were newly-converted to the faith.

Throughout most of that week, we met for extended sessions in the morning, afternoon and evenings. The general schedule was 9:00-12:00 in the morning, 2:00-4:00 in the afternoon, and 7:00-8:30 or so in the evening. The typical pattern for the individual day's meetings involved a brief devotional of songs, prayer and a word of encouragement offered by one of the local evangelists (who also acted as our interpreters), followed by our breaking up into groups by gender, the men staying inside the church building for lessons, while the women and children went out-of-doors to sit under a nearby tree for their lessons.

From Kete-Krachi we traveled

eight hours over rutted, bumpy, dirt roads, choked by clouds of fine, red dust, until we arrived at our destination, a small community called Naamuk.

As brother Mark had done at Kete-Krachi, brother Job had enlisted a group of local men to aid us as interpreters in teaching and preaching. These local brethren proved to be instrumental in our efforts, not only through their anticipating and accommodating our needs as our hosts and acting as our interpreters, but also in having laid the advance groundwork through study with and cultivation of the local people before our arrival. After our departure they would continue to supply the necessary follow-up work, confirming and strengthening those converted during our visit so that they might grow, Lord willing, to be strong, mature Christians. I have great admiration for these men, as much of what we tried to do during our month-long visit would be meaningless without their on-going efforts. Their faithfulness and zeal were an encouragement to all of us. ✝

Steven B. Choate, the son of J.C. Choate, teaches at Harding University.

To Grow Through Others . . .

Erin Choate

Our trip to Ghana, Africa, in my opinion, was an experience of physical endurance and spiritual enlightenment. Although it was, in a way, a test of faith by the physical hardships of the lack of proper food and hygiene, it was also an inspiring and powerful display of the proof that God exists and is daily surrounding us through the love and companionship of fellow brethren around the world.

Our purpose in going to Ghana was to teach. We ladies taught the children Bible stories with the Bible story books we had brought with us,, while we taught the women through one of our three to eight personal lessons we were told to write and bring along. Each of our lessons differed, but they were all very simple and easy to understand. We always (including the men) spoke through an interpreter, of course.

The mission trip to Ghana was definitely an adventure I will never forget. Hopefully, it was also a very helpful and beneficial trip to the Ghanaians who were searching for the truth.

Erin Choate is the daughter of Steve and Melinda Choate. The family lives in Searcy, Akansas, USA.

When Winds Blow Against Us

Hans J. Dederscheck

Life is a stormy path. People seek for quiet and beautiful days of peace and perfect harmony. What a dream. Sure, there are many wonderful moments in life: great experiences with our family, with friends, and at our work. However, there are also days of dark clouds and stormy winds that blow around our fragile ship, and our souls fill with fears and trouble; sometimes, we even lose our hope to see again better events. Yet, God will help us when the winds blow all around us. "*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers [manifold] temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience*" (James 1:2,3).

Christians should not forget that they are sent into adverse winds. That was the case with Jesus' disciples. Matthew 14:22-24 is the proof of this. The storm happened in order to strengthen the faith and confidence of the disciples. God teaches and trains us through adverse winds, but He never abandons us!

Even our Savior had to go through contrary winds (Matthew 4:1-10). Christ was constant and faithful. Our Christian life should always be characterized by a purpose. Our purpose is to serve Christ. Paul said, "*For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries*" (1 Corinthians 16:9). Problems are there to be taken away. A faithful Christian stays always at the Lord's side. "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" (John 9:4). While

the light of the Gospel prevails in the midst of us, let us do the Lord's will without fear and trembling.

Christ said, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). The apostle Paul noted, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3:12). The apostle Peter adds, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try (prove) you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice*" (1 Peter 4:12,13).

Christians suffer, developing their character in Christ in a world of wickedness. God wants us to be "*blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15).

There is a powerful value in contrary winds. They disclose our special works. Winds of opposition may blow with great force, but God's way of living and God's work must never be given up. Paul was convinced about this when he said, "*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*" (2 Corinthians 6:1). It is absolutely possible for Christians to leave Christ's path of truth, because they are not willing to fight against unrighteousness and sin.

In God we hope. Christ is our stronghold and a fortress for times of struggle and spiritual warfare. "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*" (Psalm 55:22). What a splendid hope.

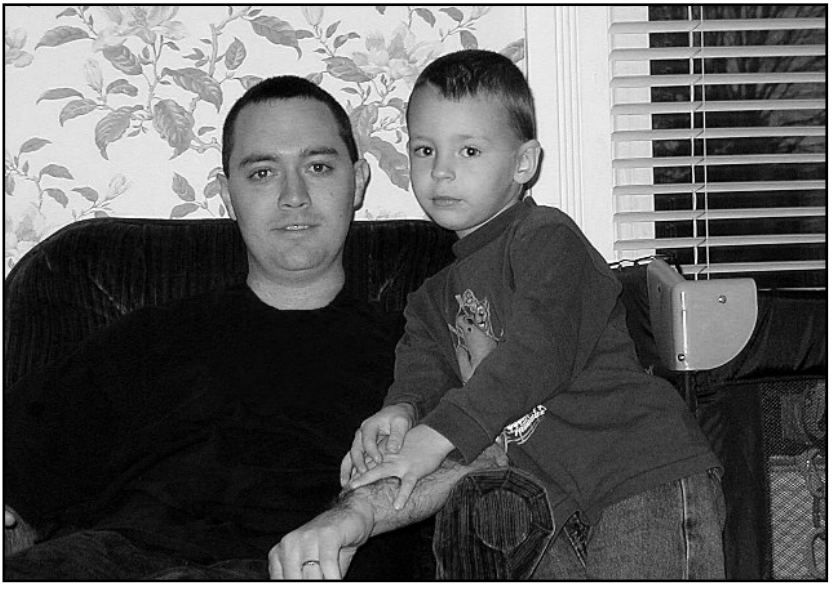
Paul tells us, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). And, as Paul "*can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Philippians 4:13), so you and I can do the same. Because of our faith in Christ, we are able to be winners over the world, the flesh, and sin.

"*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*" (2 Corinthians 12:9). When storms of trouble and fear afflict your fragile soul, and your small ship of life is about to sink in waves of darkness, think on these words of Him who watches over your life. Jesus will be at your door to provide help. ✞

Hans J. Dederscheck is an evangelist in the country of Austria.

Baby Elijah, A Daddy's Boy

Bonnie Rushmore



A child learns by example. A careful observation of young children at play will verify this point. Children will do the things those around them are doing. A child learning to talk will imitate the words that he hears. Those words may come from the radio, television, parents or other individuals with whom he comes in contact. I have always known this but I was reminded anew in talking to my son about his son.

When Raymond gets his tools out to make repairs on the house, two-year-old Elijah gets daddy's tools and tries to help. Elijah wants to wear clothes similar to daddy's clothes. Elijah wants to be like daddy. I believe this is probably true of most young children. They want to be and try to act like the adults around them. Unfortunately,

as children grow older, this role model attitude fades far too quickly.

Knowing that we have young children watching us and trying to imitate us should encourage each of us to live our lives the best we can. It should encourage us to control our tongues and to control the things our children hear on the radio and television. We should be careful to keep not only the vulgarity that is rampant in the world from their tender ears but also the gossip and negative complaints about others in which even good moral individuals sometimes become involved.

Vulgarity, gossip and backbiting are sinful (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15). When we allow this type of behavior to influence our young children, it becomes extremely difficult for them to break the sinful habit when they grow to the age of accountability and become Christians. Please, be the example to the children around you (whether it is to your children, your grandchildren, your nieces and nephews, the children in your neighborhood or in the church) that will help and not hinder them to live the Christian life.

I would like to take this thought one step further. Just as young children need parents and other adults to set the proper example for Christian living, newborn Christians also need mature Christians to set the proper example for Christian living. The apostle Paul told the Corinthian brethren (and all mankind through Bible inspiration): "*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me*" (1 Corinthians 4:16) and "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1). The Greek word translated "follower" in both of these verses means "imitator". Paul was telling the Corinthians to "imitate" or "act like" him as long as he was acting like Christ. The meaning of the word Christian is "Christ-like".

"*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Paul told the Philippians, "*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample*" (Philippians 3:17). Later, in the fourth chapter of Philippians, Paul gave instruction as to what they should be imitating.

"*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,*

think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philip-pians 4:8-9).

Paul is telling the Philippians to apply the things he taught them. His teaching was not by words (heard) only, but also by the example (seen) of his actions. The teachings he was emphasizing are outlined in verse eight — to be truthful, honest, just (innocent or holy), pure (clean, modest or chaste), lovely, of good report and virtuous (moral goodness). To be pleasing to God we must develop these qualities in our lives.

Christians today need other Christians (who have, and are continuing to develop, these characteristics in their lives) to imitate. Newborn Christians need someone to imitate — someone to "look up to" — a role model for better Christian living. Mature Christians also need someone to "look up to". They need someone to be a better example to encourage them to do better in various aspects of their lives.

Mature Christians need someone that says by example, "That person is the example of Christ, I want to be like that person, I need to improve in this aspect of my life so that I, too, can be more Christ-like."

The Thessalonians were so thrilled with the teachings of Paul that they strived to imitate him. Paul commended them for this in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, "*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.*"

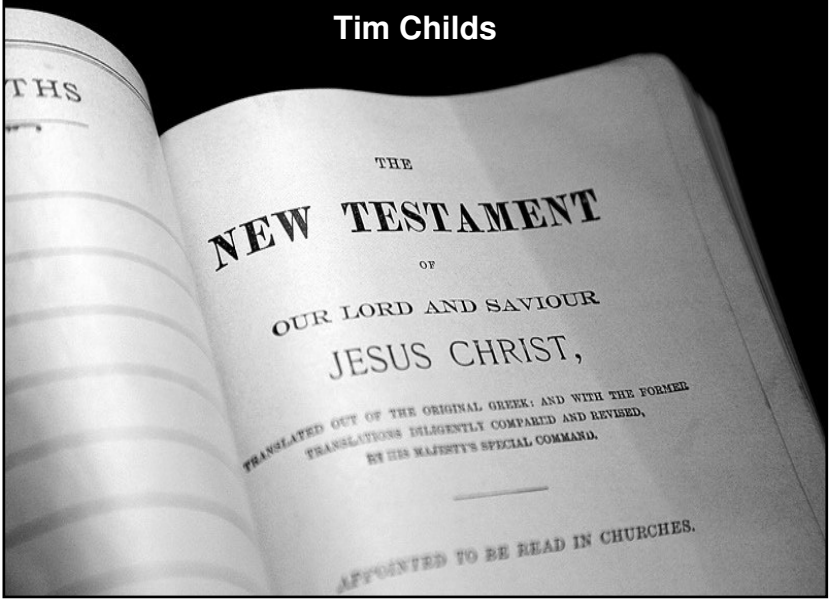
Paul did not just commend them for imitating him; he used them as an example for other Christians to imitate. "*So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing*" (1 Thessalonians 1:7,8). Paul commended the Thessalonians for going out beyond their immediate area to preach Christ and his saving power.

These are just a few of the biblical examples of using faithful Christians as examples to help us become better Christians. What kind of an example are you? Are you helping or hindering those around you to be better persons and better Christians? Are you looking for other Christians to imitate, to help you become a better Christian? If, not, why not? ✞

Bonnie Rushmore, a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*, labors daily with World Evangelism, and lives in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Now That I Am a Christian

Tim Childs



Now that I have "*tasted that the Lord is gracious*", I will intensely crave "*the sincere milk of the word*" so I may continue to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2-3; Matthew 5:6). I must remember that when I am young and weak in the faith, I am in a vulnerable stage of my development. Satan wants to steal the Word out of my heart, or otherwise render me unable to produce fruit for God (cf. Matthew 13:18-23). Jesus said, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples*" (John 15:8). I must remember it is the Word of God that brought me to this point, and it is the Word of God that will move me along in my spiritual development and fortify my faith (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Now that I have learned of God's love for me, I want to love Him back and prove my love for Him (John 3:16; 1 John 4:19). I am able to demonstrate my love for God by drawing nearer to Him, as James instructs his readers to do in his epistle (James 4:8). Further, I will seek His counsel, walk in it, and obey His Son (John 14:15), whom He has made Lord (Acts

2:36), and the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22,23). I will not be deceived by satisfaction in hearing only. I will be a *doer* of the Word (James 1:22).

Now that I am washed, sanctified and justified through Jesus' blood in his offering of Himself, I will no longer engage in any works of the flesh, such as fornication, adultery or homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Since I have been bought with a price, I do not own myself. I now belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). I must refuse any temptation to abuse God's grace by continuing in a lifestyle of sin.

I am now dead to sin, but alive to God's power of righteousness (Romans 6:1-2). Any sin or work of the flesh that keeps me from being solely under the power and influence of Jesus Christ is something I must put away from self. This also includes beverage alcohol and illegal substances. Through the Gospel, God will empower me to overcome all forms of sin and vice so that sin no more has dominion over me (Romans 6:14). Now that I have learned that my sins put Jesus on the cross, I will not crucify Him over and over again and put Him to shame (Hebrews 6:6; Isaiah 53:6).

Now that I know God has revealed Himself not only through nature, but through the Holy Scriptures, and that He alone is worthy of praise and honor, I will assemble together with God's children upon the first day of the week to worship Him "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25). I will worship Him in view of the fact that He seeks true worshippers, and with a knowledge that humans tend to become like that which we worship.

Now that I know that heaven awaits those who love God, who befriend His Son and follow Him in truth and righteousness, I will follow Him in fighting the good fight of faith every day of my life. I will pursue Heaven's gate with vigor (Hebrews 11:10). ✝

Tim Childs preaches for the Hillcrest church of Christ in Baldwyn, Mississippi, USA, and makes mission trips to India where he teaches in a Bible school.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:21,22).

5-Minute Bible Study

Why Worry?

Paula Bates

JESUS SAID: LUKE 12:22
Therefore I say to you, do not _____ about your ____, what you will eat; nor about your _____, what you will put on.

Luke 12:24 Consider the _____, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor ____: and ____ feeds them. Oh how much more value are you than the birds?

JESUS ALSO SAID: Matthew 6:28,29
"So why do you _____about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even _____ in all his glory was not arrayed like on**e** of these."

AND Matthew 6:34:"Therefore do not worry about _____ for tomorrow will _____ about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

PAUL SAID BY INSPIRATION: Phillipians 4:6,7 Be _____ for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your _____ be made known to God: and the _____ of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through **CHRIST JESUS.**

Luke 12:22 worry, life, body
Luke 12:24 ravens, barn, God
Matthew 6:28,29 worry, Solomon
Matthew 6:34 tomorrow, worry
Phillippians 4:6,7 anxious, requests, peace

Becoming Better Parents

Randall Caselman

Parenting — what an awesome concept! We have placed in our keeping a soul that must be molded into the image of God's Son. Scripture tells us that we — they — are created in His image. Now it is our responsibility to continue that shaping for the next fifteen to eighteen years. How do we manage it? What are some things we need to consider?

☆ **First, we must accept our calling.** We have been called and commissioned to do something that no one else can do: raise our children in the training and instruction of the Lord. Yes, others can teach them, but they cannot daily mold their hearts and shape their lives by the Word of God, as Christian parents can.

☆ **We must have a correct view of our heritage.** It seems that the pervasive thinking today is that children must be forced into one of two categories. Some are viewed as liabilities who drain us emotionally, physically, and financially. They are seen as inconveniences. Others are considered as performers to be trained and educated so that they will perform well by the world's standards, and thus fulfill all our expectations. Wrong! "*Children are a heritage from the Lord; a reward from Him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them*" (Psalms 127:3-5). Can you envision for a moment Abraham and Sarah ever thinking that Isaac was a liability or a performer? No, they saw him as a blessing and possession entrusted from God.

☆ **We must submit ourselves to God.** We cannot teach and model that which we are not. Children see us at our best and worst. It is not that we must be perfect, but that we must be honest. They learn to recognize the false and dishonest quickly. They can spot our hypocritical ways. Therefore, let us confess our faults before them and let them hear our prayerful pleas for forgiveness and strength to do better. They, too, need to know that God will also forgive *their* sins and shortcomings.

☆ **Get involved in their lives.** Fathers, I would change little if I had the opportunity to live my life over. However, there is one thing I would change. I would be more involved in the lives of our three children. I spent too much time working and

building a career. Now the radio station is gone, but our children are still here, grown and making their own lives. I apologize to them. God has blessed my failures, and they are faithful to Him in spite of them, but I missed out on a lot of good times that cannot be relived.

✯ **Mothers, we must learn the difference between house beautiful and family togetherness.** We must make home a place where our children want to be, where they feel comfortable bringing their friends and school companions. What better way to get to know who their friends are and to help them choose good ones?

✯ **Let them see our love of spouse.** A study was done in the seventies on what shapes our children most, emotionally. The results were published in a book, **The Silent Majority**. The authors concluded that the dominant characteristic — what they called the thermostat of emotional and mental health — was the relationship a child saw between his parents as he/she was growing up. No relationship on earth is as important as husband and wife. We will not be great parents until we become great marriage partners. Dysfunctional children come from dysfunctional parents. Fathers, love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25).

✯ **Practice loving discipline.** Discipline has become a problem in our nation, our schools, and our churches. Of course, the reason is because there is *no discipline at home.* Discipline cannot be forced, it must be taught. We cannot hire enough policemen, or build enough prisons, to force correct behavior if there is no respect for authority. We must teach children to respect authority from Scripture, in the church for the eldership, at home, at school, and for civil laws, by administering loving discipline. Our children must know that we expect them to be accountable.

Let me share what I read recently:

- **Blessed** is the home where God is, where the spirit of Christ rules, and the family worships together regularly.
- **Blessed** is the home where children are welcome and are given their rightful place, where children grow up and grownups do not act like children.
- **Blessed** is the home where each places the happiness of others first, while seeking to bring out the best in one another.
- **Blessed** is the home where all have learned to disagree without being disagreeable.

May God continue to bless our parenting efforts. ✞

GOD MAKES MARRIAGES WORK

Rick Cunningham

It would be terrible to find out that your mate is unfaithful. To know that one's marriage partner was with another person intimately would bring shame and humiliation. Such a situation would be ungodly. So, Jesus, who opposed divorce for "*any and every reason*" (Matthew 19:3-6), made one exception, that of "*marital unfaithfulness*" (Matthew 5:32).

There are many today, however, who are choosing divorce. They sever ties to their mates for reasons ranging from boredom to adventure. They see marriage as a limiting, confining union that restricts their personal freedoms and robs them of an exciting life. So, they want out.

Our laws are fairly permissive now. We have legislated that marriages can be dissolved for incompatibility. One or both partners can choose to be legally separated, but that does not mean that God has authorized the divorce.

We should take a careful look at the institution of marriage as it is defined in God's Word. No one is *required* to marry, but once vows have been made and a marriage is recognized, "*they are no longer two, but one. Therefore* ***what God has joined together, let man not separate*****"** (Matthew 19:6).

Trivial divorces have become all too common. These are displeasing to God and weaken His other institutions of the family and the church. In addition, divorce wreaks havoc in the nation. There is no incompatibility clause in the Word of God. Instead, there are instructions on loving one another, and improving one's marriage by each mate serving the other in ways God directs (cf. Ephesians 5:22-33).

Marriage isn't an institution of slavery. It is a God-designed, holy union of a male and a female in a relationship that makes everyone involved happier and spiritually healthier. If we are true followers of God, that's what our marriages will be.

Let God make your marriage. He created the institution. His Word contains instructions on how to make it work beautifully ✝

Rick Cunningham preaches for the 14th & Main congregation in Big Spring, Texas, U.S.A.

Men Committed to Marriage

Dan R. Owen

In this time of moral and spiritual disintegration, we are in grave need of strong spiritual leadership. The building block of society is the family, based on a monogamous, heterosexual marriage that conforms to the laws of God. This fundamental institution is in deep trouble. Divorce is rampant. Sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, and bisexuality are more and more a part of our societal norms. It is a time for moral and spiritual leadership. Our congregations, our community, and our nation need godly men with the courage and conviction to stand up as leaders and be unashamedly committed to Christian marriage.

Christian men need to accept it as a personal mission to preserve the divine design of the family. They must leave father and mother and commit themselves to a particular woman as their primary relationship. They must give and take emotional strength in that relationship and nurture an ongoing emotional, spiritual, and sexual relationship based on mutual commitment.

God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). There are too many unnecessary divorces. Christian men can prevent a great many of them if they will quit making excuses, quit whining about being misunderstood, quit accepting modern myths about falling in and out of love, and begin aggressively doing whatever it takes to build a good marriage. Only by seeing the example of a committed Christian husband will our young men and women learn how a Christian man is supposed to relate to the woman in his life.

The Christian man need to make an unequivocal commitment to Christian marriage. This commitment must be the dedication of both mind and body to the woman he promises to love. This means committing his eyes to look at only

one woman with desire. This means committing his lips to engage in flirtatious conversation with only one woman. This means committing his hands and arms to hold only one woman. This means establishing firm boundaries in his dealings with other women, and patrolling those boundaries with the aggressive attitude of a military guard in time of war.

Christian men need to make a commitment to love their wives in the same way that Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25,28,29). They should give themselves up to serve their wives and to meet their wives' needs in every possible way. Christian men should take whatever steps are necessary to spend needed time with their wives. It is very difficult to actively love those with whom we spend no time. Real spiritual men will draw lines at work, in recreation, and even with the television set to make sure they invest time one on one with the woman in their life.

Christian men will fight hard for a marriage if they see it is in trouble. They sacrifice to get whatever help or counseling they may need to alter relationship patterns and make their marriage succeed. Spiritual Christian men know that they cannot be Christian examples and be unscripturally divorced and remarried. People who model such behavior, contrary to God's law, are perpetuating the problem in society, not helping with solutions. Men courageous enough to remain single when divorced unscripturally provide a better example.

Men, it is time to take the gloves off. Rise up, men of God. Let's be done with our excuses and be man enough to build or rebuild a marriage with the wife of our commitment. God will accept nothing less from us! ✞

Dan R. Owen preaches for the Broadway church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, U.S.A.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church" (Eph. 5:25-29).

A husband, the owner of a new car, was somewhat reluctant to allow his wife to drive his prized possession, even to the grocery store just a few blocks from the house.

After she insisted, he finally relented, cautioning her as she departed, "Remember, if you have an accident, the newspaper will print your age."

Cled was complaining to Ned the other day about not having much pep any more. He said, "If it wasn't for stress I wouldn't have any energy at all."

You know, experience really is a wonderful thing. It is so educational. It enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.

Little Joey's mother is such a terrible cook that he got even with the neighborhood bully by inviting him over for dinner.

With a sigh, the husband put down the suitcases and gazed down the tracks at the departing train. "Sarah, if you hadn't taken so long to pack, we could have been on that train."

"I know," his wife replied sweetly. "But if you hadn't rushed me so, we wouldn't have to wait so long for the next one."

During a visit to the mental asylum a visitor asked the Director, "How do you determine whether or not a patient should be institutionalized?"

"Well," said the Director, "we fill up a bathtub, then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup, and a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," said the visitor. "A normal person would use the bucket, because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."

"No," said the Director. "A normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed near the window?"

Two paramedics were dispatched to check on a 92-year-old man who had become disoriented. They decided to take him to the hospital for evaluation.

En route, with the siren blaring, they questioned the man to determine his level of awareness. Leaning close, one asked, "Sir, do you know what we're doing right now?"

The old man slowly looked up at him and then gazed out the ambulance window.

"Oh," he replied, "I'd say about 50, maybe 55."

A teacher in second grade drew a greater-than (>) and a less-than (<) sign on the chalkboard and asked, "Does anyone remember what these mean?"

A few moments passed, and then a boy confidently raised his hand. "One means fast-forward, and the other means rewind!"

Adam was walking outside the Garden of Eden with Cain and Abel when the boys were young. Cain and Abel looked into the garden and saw waterfalls, lovely birds, lush forests, and fruit trees bending over because of the large amounts of fruit on them. Then they took a long look at where they lived. It was dry and dusty with weeds and sickly-looking trees.

"Daddy, why don't we live in there instead of out here?"

Adam explained, "Well, sons. Your mother and I used to live in there at one time, but she ate us out of house and home."

Here are a few biblical headlines as they would be written by today's liberal media:

• **On the Red Sea crossing:**
WETLANDS TRAMPLED IN LABOR STRIKE

• **On feeding the 5,000:**
PREACHER STEALS CHILD'S LUNCH

• **On healing the 10 lepers:**
LOCAL DOCTOR'S PRACTICE RUINED
or
"FAITH HEALER" CAUSES BANKRUPTCY

• **On the healing of the Gadarene demoniac:**
MADMAN'S FRIEND CAUSES STAMPEDE
or
LOCAL FARMER'S INVESTMENT LOST

•**On raising Lazarus from the dead:**
FUNDAMENTALIST PREACHER RAISES A STINK

This is a bit that I submit to anyone who has been a Christian for a number of years.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter 5 verse 12 it says that *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe."* If you haven't guessed it, I am getting at a very critical point and in a rather blunt manner. You see there are a lot of Christians who just warm a pew on Sunday. These may be fine

Mission Statement

PFC Alex Gibson

people, but unless they are doing something with their faith, and cultivating it, then they are still immature. Allow me to explain by using a very simple example, before you throw something at me!

I, at one point, was home schooled and there weren't many kids in my neighborhood. Umm. None, if I recall correctly. I chose to play games on line for a social outlet most days. At first I was very bad. I lost many a game, but I kept at it. Now, I played on average about 2 hours a night (sometimes a lot more, but let's not get into that). Over a week that's 14 hours of practice. In a month that comes to 56 hours of solid game play. That's just over two days. Are you surprised when I say that after a year I was a force to be reckoned with and had over 1000 wins to my name? It may sound like bragging but I have a point to make by this. If I spent that much time on a game and got to know it inside and out, upside and down —and it's just a game — then what about more important matters? What about faith?

I only ever got good at those games because I sought challenges and wanted harder and harder opponents. Those lessons of challenge carried over into developing my faith. When the youth group I attended wasn't going deep enough for me, I went to the adult classes. When I got to a point of understanding there, I went to the Seniors' class. And I went off by myself in the woods to ask hard questions and find answers on my own. Those questions and answers I bounced off of trusted and instructed Christians, my parents, the youth minister, some of the older men in the church, and our preacher. I remember the long phone discussions my grandmother and I had, early in those years, on evolution and Christian evidences. I am still trying to learn more and, when in doubt, I still call my old friends, many of whom are several times my age.

There is a good reason for a Christian to challenge himself/herself as highly as they may. That is because we are under orders. What orders? To preach the good news to every living creature, that Jesus Christ has delivered us out of sin and into the very heart of heaven, if only we will accept His grace by following His word.

To be equipped to carry out these orders, we need to know His word, and to be ready to answer any questions that may arise. Hence, the verse to always be ready to give an answer to every man that asks about the hope that is alive within you. Sadly, in this day and age, not many Christians are able to give answers from Scripture.

The other day I was on guard with a friend who is not a Christian. With hours to burn, we started talking about everything from games to politics. But religion was the subject we spent the most time on. He asked me questions like, "So you're saying if a good man who never hurts anyone and gives time and money to charity and lives a selfless life dies and is not a Christian he's going to burn in hell?" It's a hard question, but the Bible still says that faith without works is dead, and works without faith is meaningless.

In terms of faith we must be ready to say what we believe and why we believe it — not just "This is what I believe ...", but "All of us have to believe and do what God says in His Word ..." And while the answers may be hard, they are there. A bit of friendly advice, though, is that a soft answer turns away wrath; not that your resolve should be any less, but teach with genuine love.

And it is important for a Christian to be well read on many subjects interrelated with his/her faith. I've gotten into discussions dealing with faith and astronomy, biology, history, morals, schools,

magic, music, language, art, sex, drinking, mythology, food, and so on. In short, we need to command a strong understanding of life in order to know our faith well enough to teach it.

Adversity can also add to our strength. I've been able to attend only 7 or 8 church services in the past 2 years, thanks to the Army, but I've grown spiritually during this time. To use a tired analogy, if you take a coal away from the fire, it gets cool and burns out. But, if it is a hot enough coal, when it is removed from the fire it will start more fires. It takes time and experiences to become stronger, though, developed through a knowledge of God's Word and practice in stepping out on faith, depending on Him to see you through.

One of the saddest bits of conversation I had went something like this: Me, "Well as for people who aren't Christians, they should at least be exposed to it by other Christians."

My friend, "Well, then I'd say Christians have done a pathetic job; I mean 2000 years, and there are still cultures that hardly know about Christianity." While I can't agree 100%, the fact that I cannot deny that we have yet to preach to every living thing is a sad failure to me. If you agree, then by all means don't just agree; do something! But go armed into your spiritual battles. I mean — come on — you're trying to wrestle these people from the jaws of Satan. And he will do everything in his considerable power to keep you from winning, by making all the things of the world look lovely and those who chase after it seem happy.

That's a hard fight and requires a strong arm and a skilled hand to wield the sword of God's word and win. To get there you must first grow into a spiritual adult and then practice your fighting skills. Then you must actually go to the fight.

Remember, too, always to go to the place that needs help. It will do some good for you to be a part of a large group helping many, but to the individual who needs your help and is not targeted by the large group, your full attention will come much nearer to God's heart. After all, does not the Good Shepherd leave the 99 sheep that are in the fold, to go out and find the one that was lost? It is a message God's word wrote on my heart, that God doesn't let people slip through the cracks. We're the ones who do that when we don't try to teach.

Well, I think that's enough for one day. As usual, if you have any feedback for me I'd love to hear from you. God bless. ✞

Alex Gibson is currently in the US Army, stationed in Iraq. His email address is zex1@hotmail.com

A Pagan America?

Betty Burton Choate

No, this is not the typical "Church History" article, but if churches of Christ in the US are not very careful, it will become our history as well as the history of our country.

These are crucial times when humanism, atheism, and an anti-Christian spirit are well on the way to gaining control of government, of the media, and of our educational system. It is the time for the church to stand firm, without compromise, on the solid truths of God's word, even when conditions reach the point of suffering persecution for the Truth's sake.

Are we strong enough, spiritually, to endure whatever comes? Please read on:

Cultures, ways of thinking, national behavior are formed largely by predominant religious teaching. The old statement, "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," is a declaration of the tremendous differences in thinking between large sections of our world. In times past, not many Americans personally knew "foreigners". Today, newcomers from other cultures live in practically every small town in the States.

What is the result? First, there is curiosity about the new people; and, meeting them, they may seem likeable, or they may seem aloof. Getting past the strangeness in dress and the heavily accented English, it may then seem that they are not so "foreign" after all. But in the majority of cases, if the acquaintance is developed to any depth, there will be an unfolding of differences of thinking and values that will seem incomprehensible to the Christian mind. The feeling of being up against a thick wall will often arise in conversations, a feeling of helplessness in the efforts to really penetrate and understand the thinking. And the longer the acquaintance continues and the deeper it becomes, the more of the subtle differences one will discover.

These differences are not because of the geographical differences in birth places but because of the religious/cultural differences which have molded our thinking and values as well as theirs.

The following are statements, headlines, doctrines in pagan lands:

"A man may have four wives, if he provides for all of them equally ...." "Don't trust any Pakistani, not even me ...." "Eleven-year-old boy sacrificed to Kali ...." "We will kill. We are fighting a holy war ...." "Those who would die for Islam must be willing to kill for it ...." "Eight million dollars spent for gold and gems for a new crown for an idol ...." "The bride price was not enough. The husband poured acid on his wife because she would not demand more money from her father ...." "Children are kidnapped and maimed and then put on the streets to beg for their owners."

"Don't compliment anything because the demons would hear and would mar or destroy whatever is good or beautiful ...." "Offer food and gifts to Shiva to appease him ...." "1 must have been evil in my past life for the gods to have cursed me with five daughters ...." "The entire cosmos, all sounds, words, languages, all things and all creatures come from the sound, 'Om'." "God is the dispassionate observer of the play of life, all of which is only an illusion that seems real but is not ...."

◆ When we see masses of people following particular lines of behavior, we can know that underlying, wide-spread religious teaching is responsible for it.

◆ When a whole nation will follow a fanatical leader into a "holy" war and will commit acts of terrorism, such as the unprovoked killing of people in airports, in the name of religion, it is because strong teachings have molded their minds in that way.

◆ When nations will allow the poor to live in hunger and the orphans to beg on the streets, as "their karma" from a past life, while pouring money into temples to adorn idols with diamonds and to cover domes with gold, it is because strong religious teachings have molded their minds in that way.

◆ When superstitions and rituals control most of the activities of peoples' lives, it is because strong teachings have molded their minds in that way.

◆ When suspicion and the expectation of being cheated are the windows through which people view the world, it is because strong religious teachings have molded their minds in that way.

◆ When passivity, laziness, lack of initiative are national attitudes, it is because strong teachings have molded minds in that way.

Our country is changing far more rapidly than most of us realize. For the first time, massive numbers of people from pagan areas are settling here, and they are bringing their thinking and culture with them. Large temples and mosques are being built and lavishly adorned by them. Their beliefs are beginning to permeate our own culture. Often, in listening to words of

songs or reading synopses of books, I am appalled at the pagan concepts that are being subtly implanted in minds. Many dabble with astrology, horoscopes, yoga, chanting, transcendental meditation, ideas of reincarnation, doctrines of karma and destiny, demons.

Our culture has been one predominantly shaped by the teachings of Christ: **" ... let him labor, working with his hands ... "** (Ephesians 4:28). The attitude of giving one's best to whatever he undertakes grows from the admonition **"Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord"** (Colossians 3:23). Being benevolent — caring for orphans, underprivileged, victims of disasters both nationally and individually — comes from **the Biblical teaching of being one's brother's keeper**. Contrast this to paganism where money is given for the priests, the temples and the idols, and where personal hardship in the lives of others is looked upon as the just desserts for behavior in a past life. Christians are taught throughout the scriptures to be caring and compassionate. This attitude has so permeated our nation that the third source of national aid (after government and business) is the voluntary donation of time, services, and money. More of this type of work is done by Americans than by the rest of the world combined, according to statistics.

"Let your yea be yea ..." (Matthew 5: 37) has shaped our culture to the point that a greater degree of trust and honesty is — or has been — practiced here than anywhere else. We don't live with the expectation of being cheated at the grocery store or the post office, and we can still return broken merchandise and be believed that we didn't break it ourselves. These common things that we take for granted are not true in pagan societies.

In the past, as Christians, we have seen Satan's work of error taught in denominationalism. The divisiveness among believers in Christ and the compromise in His teachings have led to much of the moral breakdown that has already been taking place in our country.

The stage has been set by Satan now for even more drastic differences.

He has brought to us the teachings of thinking and behavior that are totally contradictory to the teachings of Christ. He will work diligently and unceasingly to remake the "Christian" culture we have had.

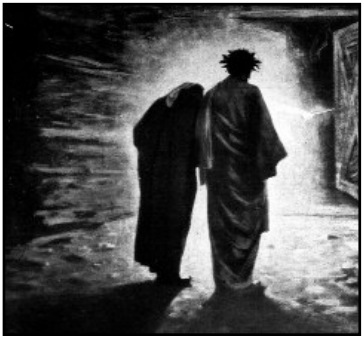
If we are unaware, complacent, preoccupied with our buildings and the niceties of the order of services — with trivialities — Satan will find no opposition to his progress.

The "politically correct" description of America today is "a pluralistic society". Will we someday be called a pagan nation, rather than "Christian"? ✞

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate.

OUR DOOR TO GOD'S THRONE

Andy Jooste



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2. PROVISIONS WITHIN THE TREASURY OF GOD
   a. All spiritual blessings: Ephesians 1:3 relates to eternal salvation; Ephesians 2:6-10.
   b. Satisfaction of every temporal need (not greed): Philippians 4:19.
   c. Multiplication of everything committed: 2 Corinthians 9:6-9.
3. THERE IS A DOOR AJAR
   a. Frustration if man did not have access, but the way is open: Hebrews 10:19-22.
   b. Jesus is that access Door: John 10:7-9.
   c. Man need not "kick it down" — simply enter in: Galatians 3:26,27.

CONCLUSION

a. Paul had a heavenly vision, and obeyed it: Acts 26:15-19; Acts 22:16.
b. Satan seeks to hinder our response: 2 Corinthians 4:4-7.
c. Promise to those who enter in: Revelation 21:14-17 — the right to tree of life. ✞

Andy Jooste is from the Republic of South Africa

The Assurance We Have in Christ

Loy Mitchell

Introduction

A. We live in a world of doubt and uncertainity.
B. Will there be more war? Peace?
C. What about jobs and inflation?
D. Will my children remain faithful to God?
E. There is assurance in Christ.
F. Assurance means full confidence or trust. It means freedom from doubt and fear.

I. Paul wrote of the full assurance of understanding (Colossians 2:1-5).

A. Paul emphasizes the total adequacy of redemption in Christ.
B. He desired that the Colossians have full assurance of understanding.
C. Song: "A Mighty Fortress"; Song: "A Shelter in the Time of Storm".

II. Paul and his companions preached the gospel in much assurance (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

A. They knew that the power of God was in their message (Romans 1:16).
B. They had spoken words by inspiration and not words of human wisdom.
C. The evangelists were fully convicted or persuaded that their message was true.
D. Song: "Standing on the Promies"; Song: "My Hope is Built on Nothing Else".

III. Paul was fully persuaded that God would care for him (2 Timothy 1:12).

A. Paul's faith and trust were not in what he knew, but in WHOM he knew.
B. He knew God by believing and obeying Him.
C. We can heve the same assurance today when we abide in Christ.
D. Song: "Blessed Assurance"; Song: "I Know Whom I Have Believed".

IV. The author of Hebrews exhorts us to draw near to God in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22).

A. There must be a complete belief and faith in God and His Word.

B. We must have a trusting confidence that what God says is true.
C. This faith is a faith that renders obedience daily.
D. Song: "Only In Thee"; Song: "Jesus Is Mine".

V. One proof that we know God is when we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3).

A. Truly knowing God is more than inellectual acceptance that God exists.
B. Walking in the light means learning and doing God's will.
C. Song: "I Know That My Redeemer Lives".

Conclusion

A. Do you have this full assurance? ✞

Loy Mitchell is a former missionary to Zimbabwe, and he now lives in Dyersburg, Tennessee, USA.

The Law of the Garbage Truck

I hopped in a taxi and we took off for the airport. We were driving in the right lane when suddenly a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded, and missed the other car by just inches! The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy, and I mean, he was really friendly. So I asked, "Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!"

This is when my taxi driver taught me what I now call, "The Law of the Garbage Truck". He explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it and sometimes they'll dump it on you.

Don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. Don't take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home, or on the streets. The bottom line is that successful people do not let garbage trucks take over their day. Life is too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so: love the people who treat you right, and pray for the ones who don't. — **Unknown Author**

Unprofitable or Unholy?

T. Pierce Brown

Jesus said in Matthew 25:30, "*And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" So we might assume that if we are unprofitable, we are unholy and lost. However, it may be well for us to realize that the word "unprofitable" is used six times in the KJV and is translated from four different words. They are all related, but apparently have slightly different meanings.

Even when the same word is used, it may have a slightly different meaning in a different context, as is the case with many English words. For example, in Luke 17:10, we find, "*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*" Here is pictured a servant who has done all the things commanded, and is therefore presumed to be in a saved relationship with God. Yet, he is called unprofitable. The Greek word here is "achreios (akh-ri'-os)" and apparently means, "without merit". He has done all he is supposed to do, but he did not thereby profit God, or give Him any more than His due.

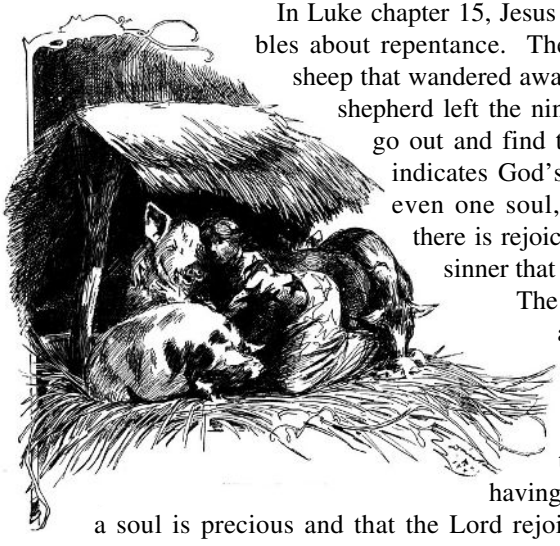
In Romans 3:12 and Titus 3:9, the same root word is used in a verb form and refers to one whose character is such that he has become useless to God. A similar word is used in Philemon 1:11, where Paul is talking about Onesimus. He was at one time unprofitable to Philemon, for he had run away. It had nothing to do with his being in a lost or sinful state, but he was lost to Philemon.

My primary point in this article is to help us to understand that although we are all unprofitable servants in the sense that we do not give God any "profit" or gain by any or all of the obedient acts we perform, it does not mean that we are therefore lost. We simply do not *deserve* to be saved and cannot claim to be saved on the basis of *having done all we are supposed to do,* which none of us have. ✞

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) was a preacher, teacher, writer, and elder for many years, and he lived in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Hog Pen Lessons

Owen Cosgrove



In Luke chapter 15, Jesus taught three great parables about repentance. The first one concerned a sheep that wandered away from the fold, and the shepherd left the ninety-nine other sheep to go out and find the lost one. The story indicates God's providential care over even one soul, and the lesson is that there is rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repents.

The second parable is about a woman that had ten coins and lost one. Even with nine coins left, she did not have the joy that came with having ten. The moral is that a soul is precious and that the Lord rejoices when a lost one is reclaimed. The sheep apparently was lost through personal carelessness, and the coin was misplaced through the carelessness of another.

However, the third parable is about a young man who became lost through willfulness. He was the younger son of an apparently rich man who allowed him to claim his part of the estate and to "go out on his own". We know this as the story of the Prodigal Son. "Prodigal" means wasteful. This son threw himself into a riotous lifestyle, and such living left him broke and desperate. When he "came to himself", he returned in humble submission to his father's will, and his repentance brought joy and forgiveness.

The young man's older brother protested his father's kindness toward the penitent son, but the loving parent reminded him that his brother had been dead and was alive again — he was lost, and then he was found. God wants man to repent. Man is not saved by faith alone. To please God, he must repent and obey. There are some wonderful lessons of life that the young man learned in the misery and decadence of the hog pen:

1. He learned that freedom has responsibilities. His sudden feeling of independence caused him to make several rash and foolish decisions that nearly ruined his life.

2. He learned the folly of wastefulness. The old saying that "he who wastes will come to want" is certainly true in this case.

3. He learned the high cost of low living. Crime, immorality, and vice can be a drain on every resource of life.

4. He learned that life can be hard. It is not meant for people to have fun all of the time. If we don't want to work hard when we don't have to, the time may come when we will have to work hard when we don't want to.

5. He learned that craving pleasure is a symptom of immaturity. The apostle Paul said that when he was a child he thought and acted as a child, but that when he became a man he put away childish things. The hardship of the hog pen brought the young man lessons that pleasure and fun could never have taught.

6. He learned that few people in the world love as does a good parent. His fair weather friends were scarce when his funds ran out.

7. He learned that desperate people will do almost anything. He was tempted to eat the husks that the swine were eating. Sinful living often lowers people to debauchery and desperation.

8. He learned that it takes resolution and courage to be humble and to return to God. A weaker and less committed person would not have had the will to turn his life around.

9. He learned that a person must not let hypocrites keep him away from God. The elder brother was of little encouragement to this pitiful and ruined person. It took the love of the Father and a strong determination for the Prodigal Son to make that long trip home. In the hog pen he resolved that he must not let anything keep him away from home and peace.

10. He learned that his Father truly loved him and would joyfully give him another chance. This is the message of Christ's Gospel. You and I are too important and precious to waste our lives in the hog pens of life. Repentance and obedience are the open doors that lead to God and Heaven.

And now, for nearly two thousand years the story of that young man's courage and wisdom has led sad souls who were crushed by sin to take new hope and to return to God and His love. Suffering can be a great teacher if we will let it. ✞

Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and lives in Waxahachie, Texas, U.S.A.

Contrasting Characters

Gary C. Hampton

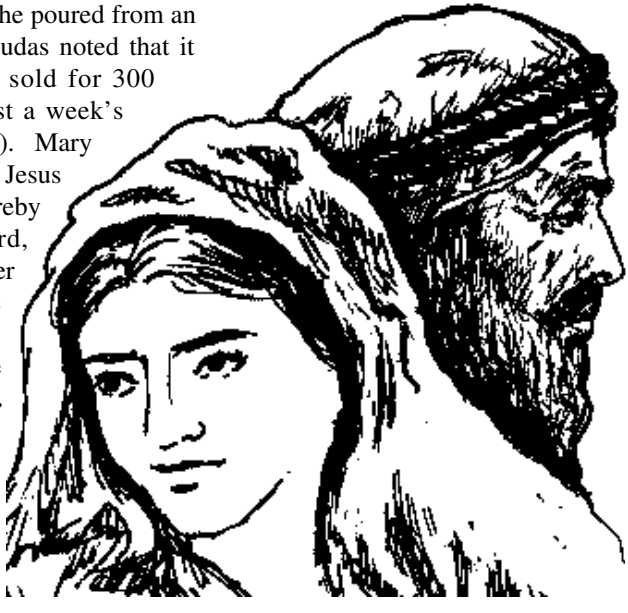
***"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head"* (Mark 14:3).**

About a week before His death, Jesus was sitting at the table in the house of Simon the leper (Mark 14:3). Three distinct types of character were displayed there.

First, there was the **contributor.** Mary began to anoint Jesus' head and feet with nard, a fragrant, expensive perfume from an east Indian plant that she poured from an alabaster flask. Judas noted that it could have been sold for 300 denarii, or at least a week's wages (John 12:5). Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair, thereby honoring the Lord, who had raised her brother from the dead.

Second, there was the **critic.** Judas may have intended to embarrass the worshiper, but he had no real concern for the poor. He was a selfish embezzler. Unfortunately, others joined him in his criticism. After being rebuked, Judas sold the Lord for 30 pieces of silver (Mark 14:10,11).

Third, there was the **Christ.** He complimented Mary for the good work she did and said they



would have other opportunities to help the poor. Clearly, Jesus thought worship was as important as benevolence. He honored her for her work by saying, "*She has done what she could....*" That honor continues to this day.

Like Mary, we should honor Jesus who gave up so much to save us (Romans 5:6-8; 1 Timothy 1:15). Paul wrote, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9). Remember, our works can continue to produce good fruit in others even after we die (Revelation 14:13; Hebrews 11:4).

We must avoid being the critic, or joining in criticism with others. Our Lord wants us to use our freedom as an opportunity to serve others, not destroy them and the church to which they belong (Galatians 5:13-15).

We should all desire to follow the footsteps of Jesus and be one who encourages others in love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). Our goal should be to be like Philemon, who Paul said refreshed the hearts of the saints (Philemon 7). ✞

Gary C. Hampton is Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

It pays to think outside the box!

We went to breakfast at a restaurant where the "seniors' special" was two eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast for $1.99. "Sounds good," my wife said. "But I don't want the eggs." "Then I'll have to charge you two dollars and forty-nine cents because you're ordering a la carte," the waitress warned her. "You mean I'd have to pay for not taking the eggs?" my wife asked incredulously. "YES!!" stated the waitress. "I'll take the special then," my wife said. "How do you want your eggs?" the waitress asked. "Raw and in the shell," my wife replied. She took the two eggs home. DON'T MESS WITH SENIORS!!! We've been around the block more than once!

Do We *All* Receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

J.C. Choate

Many believe that all who obey the Lord receive, or *should receive,* the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Believing this, they conclude that this gives them the power to do miraculous things as the apostles did in their day. To convince themselves and others of this, they attempt to prove that the 120 believers of Acts 1:15 received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, even as the apostles did, in Acts 2:1-4.

Please consider these questions and answers:

1. Who was promised the Comforter or the Holy Spirit before the Lord's departure from this world?

ANSWER: Speaking to the *apostles,* Christ said, *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send* ***unto you*** *from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness,* ***because ye have been with me from the beginning"*** [not every person of the 120 had been with Christ from the beginning] (John 15:26,27). Again, speaking to the eleven apostles who were gathered with Him (Acts 1:2,4) on the Mount of Olives just before His Ascension to heaven, Jesus said, *"And, behold, I will send the promise of my Father* ***upon you;*** *but tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high"* (Luke 24:49). Also read Acts 1:8.

2. Did the 120 disciples of Acts 1 receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER: Reading through the first and second chapters of Acts, one can readily see that the apostles were the focal point. The original text of the Scriptures was not divided into chapters and verses. It read, from Acts 1:26 concerning Matthias, the man chosen to replace Judas, that *"he was numbered with the* ***eleven apostles.*** *Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come,* ***they*** *[the apostles] were all with one accord in one place...and they were* ***all*** *[the apostles] filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave* ***them*** *utterance..."* (Acts 2:1,4).

The listeners marveled at hearing these varied languages, and they asked, *"Look, are not* ***all these who speak Galileans?"*** (v. 7) Not all the 120 would have been Galileans, but *the apostles* were from Galilee. They were the ones who had been promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and they were the ones who received Him in this miraculous way.

3. Was *"the gift of the Holy Spirit",* as promised to the multitude in Acts 2:38, the same as the miraculous **baptism of the Holy Spirit?**

ANSWER: No, it was simply the giving of the Holy Spirit Himself, *the renewal of spiritual life within the obedient,* given to all who are scripturally baptized (Acts 5:32).

4. Some people think that on the day of Pentecost all believers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the accompanying power to do miracles. If so, why was it necessary for **the apostles** to lay their hands on the seven disciples chosen for special service in Acts 6:3-6, in order for them to have miraculous power?

ANSWER: Actually, only the apostles had received **the baptism**

of the Holy Spirit, while all others had been **baptized only in water,** receiving **the forgiveness of their sins** and the **indwelling** of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, only the apostles had the power to do miracles. Neither the 120 of Acts 1:15 nor the 3,000 of Acts 2:41 *had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the apostles had.*

Yet in Acts 6:1-8, when the apostles asked that seven good men be chosen to serve the people, they designated that they be *"men of good reputation,* ***full of the Holy Spirit*** *and wisdom..."* It is clear that these men had already received the Holy Spirit — *the gift of the Holy Spirit as promised in Acts 2:38* — the non-miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, but they had not received any *miraculous power* through the Holy Spirit. It was only after these men were chosen and the apostles laid their hands on them that they were able to perform miracles (Acts 6:8; 8:5,6)!

5. Today, do believers in Christ receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER: No. Because that special baptism was promised and given only to the apostles (representing the Jewish people) and to Cornelius and his household (representative of Gentiles, Acts 10). Other than these, there are no instances of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in the Scriptures. The apostles could select **certain worthy ones** and **lay their hands on them,** giving them **individual miraculous gifts,** but **those people could not give the gifts to others** (Acts 6:6; 8:14-17). We see this truth in Acts 5:12: *"And by the hands of* ***the apostles*** *were many signs and wonders wrought among the people..."* and in Acts 8:15: *"when they* [the apostles] *were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost."*

This limited the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit to the first century, in the infancy of the church, while the Scriptures were in the process of being written and confirmed by the miraculous power of the writers.

6. What do people receive today when they are baptized?

ANSWER: When we obey the Lord, we receive the promised *gift of the Holy Spirit — God's Spirit dwelling within us and giving us spiritual life* — as recorded in Acts 2:38 and Romans 8:9-11, which involves no miraculous power.

Why do we not receive miraculous power today? Because we have the confirmed Word of God to guide us (Mark 16:20; John 20:30,31), and faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), not through seeing a miracle. ✝

J.C. Choate, Editor and founder of *The Voice of Truth International,* passed from this life February 1, 2008.

Did Jesus Ever Condemn Homosexuality?

Mike Benson

Question: *"Is there any place in the New Testament where Jesus actually condemned homosexuality? If so, I have not been able to find it. It seems to me that if the Savior didn't say it was wrong, then neither should we."*

Answer: While it is true that there is no New Testament record of where Jesus explicitly stated that homosexuality is wrong, He did in fact condemn the behavior. A careful study of the Bible will bear this out. Please read the following Bible passages and then consider the questions that follow:

1. *"And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'"* (Matthew 19:4,5).

Question: What did Jesus say about God's creative work? Did He make Adam and Joseph? Did He create male and male, or did He create male and female? According to this passage, what has been God's plan for sexual union (one flesh) since the beginning of time? Was His plan for a male partner to be joined to another male partner, or was it for a husband to be united to his wife? According to this passage, is a man to cleave to his male partner, or to his spouse?

Consider: Since Jesus approved of His Father's plan (i.e., one man, one woman, one flesh), could we correctly say that Jesus condemned homosexuality?

2. "*For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?*" (John 5:46,47).

Questions: Under what law was Jesus born? Under what law did He live? **Answer**: The Law of Moses (cf. Galatians 4:4). Did Jesus endorse and follow the Law of Moses? What did the Law of Moses say about homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17)?

Consider: Since Jesus was born and lived under the Law of Moses, and since He endorsed the Law of Moses, and since the Law of Moses explicitly condemned homosexuality, then could we correctly say that Jesus also condemned it?

3. "*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for he will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you*" (John 16:12-15).

Questions: What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do for the apostles? **Answer**: Guide them into all truth (verse 13). As the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, would He speak on His own authority? **Answer:** No. He would speak on the authority of Christ (verse 14). What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do in verse 14? **Answer**: "He [i.e., the Holy Spirit] will take of what is Mine [i.e., Christ's] and declare it to you" (i.e., the apostles).

Consider: Since (1) the apostles would be guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit, and since (2) the Holy Spirit would not speak on His own authority, but instead would speak on the authority of Christ, and since (3) the Holy Spirit would take of what was Christ's and declare it to the apostles, then by whose authority would the apostles speak/write/teach when the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth? **Answer**: Christ's.

Question: What did the apostle Paul (by Christ's authority) say about the practice of homosexuality? **Answer:** Read Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10. The lifestyle is clearly identified and just as clearly condemned.

Yes, Jesus did condemn homosexuality in His Word. The good news is that there is hope for the homosexual; he/she has reason to believe there is hope for a brighter future. Paul states that some at Corinth had engaged in homosexual acts, but they had been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The same can happen today. As with anyone who repents of a sin, the homosexual can be forgiven. He/she can experience the same freedom and joy that any other sinner knows when he/she becomes a Christian. The Bible condemns homosexual sex, but it clearly states that non-practicing homosexuals can be saved, just as all other penitent and obedient sinners can be saved, if they remain faithful to God's law of grace and pardon. ✞

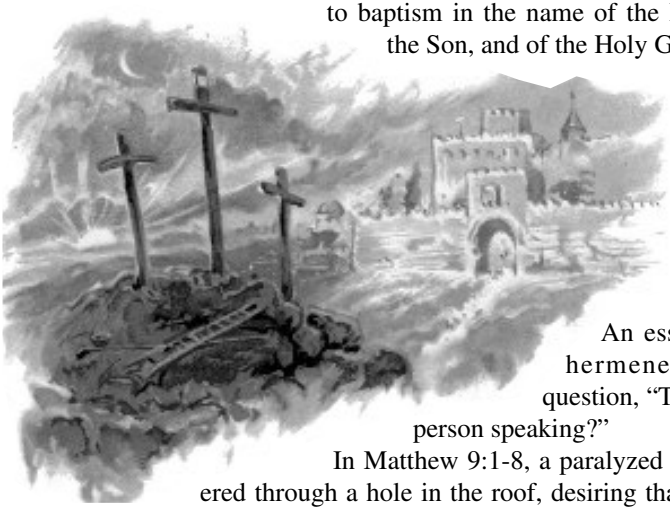
Mike Benson is a Gospel preacher living in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA.

What About the Thief on the Cross?

Steve Vice

"What about the thief on the cross?" This is a common question asked by sincere people, and it is a question that can be answered very simply and clearly.

Many times this question is answered with an explanation of the separation of the Old and New Covenants. Since it is a fact that the thief on the cross did not live under the New Covenant, it follows that he was not subject to baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.



However, another (and I believe, simpler) explanation is this. To whom did Jesus speak those words? An essential rule of hermeneutics is the question, "To whom is the person speaking?"

In Matthew 9:1-8, a paralyzed man was lowered through a hole in the roof, desiring that Jesus would heal him. Jesus said to that man, "*Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.*" Were the sins of all the people who heard Jesus speak those words forgiven of their sins? A few moments later Jesus said to this man, "*Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.*" Did all who heard Jesus take up their beds and walk? Did all paralyzed people in Jerusalem take their beds and go to their homes? Of course not! Why? Because Jesus spoke those words to only that one man.

When Jesus went to eat with Simon the Pharisee, a sinful woman stood behind Him, weeping, and washing His feet with her tears. Jesus said to this woman, "*Your sins are forgiven*" (Luke 7:48). Did He speak those words to

all who were in the house? Can we be forgiven today like this sinful woman, by weeping and washing Jesus' feet with our tears? No. Those words of forgiveness were spoken only to that one woman.

When Jesus said, "*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43), to whom was He speaking? Was He speaking to both thieves? Did both thieves go to be with Jesus in paradise? No. Was he speaking to John and His mother, Mary, who were standing within hearing distance? No. He spoke those words only to that one man who was hanging beside Him, and that one man was with Jesus in Paradise that day.

Nowhere else in the New Testament can we find anyone who was saved like this thief. When Peter and the apostles were asked what had to be done to be saved, they did not answer, "Nothing, but today you will be with Jesus in Paradise." However, they did answer, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*" (Acts 2:38).

Which words has Jesus spoken to you? "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43), or, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15,16). The answer is clear.

People today are not saved as the thief on the cross was saved. In Acts 2:37-41, believers repented of their sins and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 8:1-12, the Gospel of Christ was preached, people believed it, and were baptized into Jesus Christ for salvation. When Phillip preached to the man from Ethiopia in Acts 8:26-39, the man confessed his belief that Jesus was the Son of God. Then both he and Philip went down into the water, where Philip baptized him. This man of Ethiopia came rejoicing in the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered why people do not hold up Zacchaeus the tax collector as an example of salvation for us today? Jesus said to him, "*Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham*" (Luke 19:9). As far as we know, Zacchaeus was never baptized. Could it be the fact that he was willing to give half of his goods to the poor, and to repay anyone he had wronged, that people do not uphold his salvation as a pattern for us today? The fact is, Jesus did not speak those words to us today.

What is God's will for you today? For the answer see Mark 16:15,16. ✞

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

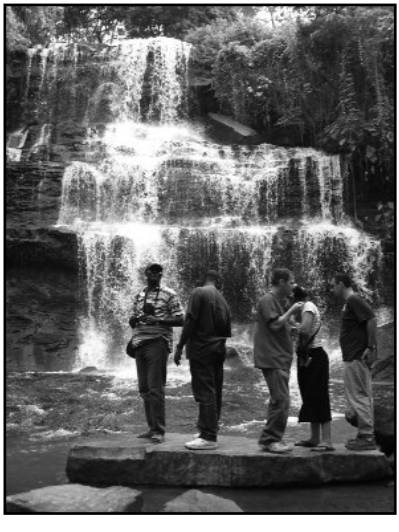
GHANA IN BRIEF

Ted Wheeler

While Ghana's history goes back thousands of years, the current tribal groups that make up the country were settled in the area by the 1400's. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to make contact along the "Gold Coast", as Ghana was then called, in 1471. By 1481 they constructed a fort at El Mina and within a few years were exporting a thousand pounds of gold per year. In the coming years many other European nations followed and built forts to exert their influence along the coast. The Dutch and the British established a strong presence, and over the years the Europeans competed and fought over control of the rich resources. In the 1700's emphasis shifted from exporting gold to the slave trade. The British continued to grow in influence and by 1844 had consolidated their power and had begun exercising considerable control over much of the area along the coast. In 1902 the British annexed the Asante and Northern Territories. In 1921 Trans-Volta Togoland was seized from Germany, and the Gold Coast Colony took on much of Ghana's present day form.

In the coming the years the British began to develop the infrastructure and resources of the area. In time, indigenous residents were brought into government and, with the rise of nationalism, on March 6, 1957 independence was gained and the new nation took the name "Ghana". On July 1, 1960 Ghana became a Republic and Kwame Nkrumah was elected President. In the mid-1960's Ghana experienced its first coup and entered into a period of political unrest. A new constitution and democratic elections were held in 1992 with Jerry Rawlings being elected President. He was reelected in 1996. In 2000 John Kuffuor, of the opposition NNP party, was elected as President, and was reelected in 2004. Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held on December 7, 2008, but a run-off will be necessary before the winners can be annoounced.

Ghana's capital is Accra. The nation is divided into ten regions: Greater Accra, Central, Eastern, Western, Volta, Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Upper East, Upper West and Northern. Each region is divided into districts. In addition to Ghana's central government there is still a system of chieftaincy throughout the country. At the head of a tribal group will be a paramount chief with his elders and sub-chiefs. While the government deals with affairs of state, criminal offences, etc., chieftaincy deals with land distribution, non-criminal offenses, cultural issues, etc. When visiting an area, it is always a matter of courtesy to inform both the local government authority and local chiefs of one's visit and activities.



One of Ghana's beautiful falls.

Ghana is located just north of the equator on the Greenwich Meridian. Along its southern coast is the Gulf of Guinea (part of the mid-Atlantic Ocean). It is bounded by the nations of Togo (east), Cote D'Ivoire (west) and Burkina Faso (north). Its weather is tropical with two main seasons. The rainy season occurs from May-September when, during the summer months, the climate is influenced by weather off the mid-Atlantic. The

A typical Ganaian family.

dry season (harmattan) occurs when the winds blow south from the Sahara desesrt. Ghana's landscape consists of the coastal savannah, rain forest located through the west and central parts of the country, and the inland savannah located in northern Ghana. Ghana has many places of interest: game reserves, waterfalls, historic sites and numerous old forts along the coast. Its major cities are Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. Two major seaports are located at Takoradi and Tema.

The population of Ghana is now nearing 24 million, approximately 40% of these being under the age of 15. Life expectancy is 60 — primarily due to disease, accidents and an infant mortality rate of 5%.

Ghana has several major tribal groups. Some of the divisions are: Akan 45.3%, Mole-Dagbon 15.2%, Ewe 11.7% and Ga-Dangme 7.3%. English is Ghana's official language. Seventy-nine languages are spoken among the tribal groups.

Ghanaians are a very religious people. 69% profess to be Christians; 16% practice Islam, with the remaining numbers following traditional beliefs. Most, like Saul, in all good conscience, practice their faith and are regular in their attendance and involvement with their religious

A traditional drummer.

Pagnatiik tribal chief.

communities. Many, like the Ethiopian in Acts 8, read the scripture regularly and welcome the offer to study the Bible further. Some, like the Macedonian in Paul's vision, entreat us to come over and help them.

While the people of Ghana are very diverse in their histories, languages and religious beliefs, they are united in their national pride, friendliness, hospitality, resourcefulness and resilience. Over the years Ghana has become a model for many nations seeking development and democracy.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

The church of Christ was established in Ghana in 1960. John Gaidoo was the first convert. He had written to missionaries in Nigeria and studied with them through the mail. After a year or so, he obeyed the gospel and began preaching in 1960. As a result, the Lord's church was established in Ghana. Seven acres of land were purchased in Kumasi and became the home of Bomso Church of Christ and Ghana Bible College.

Other early converts were Samuel Obeng (Kumasi), Daniel Ampadu-Asiamah (Accra) and Christian Nsoah (Tema), just to name a few. The first missionaries were Jerry & Jean Reynolds and Dewayne & Jane Davenport. Many others have contributed to the work over the years: missionary families, campaigners, clinic workers, etc.

Brother Gerald Fruziah Sr. later moved to Kumasi and assisted Daniel Ampadu-Asiamah, who was in Ghana Bible College at the time, in establishing the church in Ghana's capital. The first service was held in Accra on Sunday, May 12, 1968, in a shed at the market in Kaneshie. Eleven people attended. In the weeks that followed, brother Daniel would travel to Accra each weekend to hold services and do personal work. After five weeks he had his first convert. In the fall of the same year, George and Ida Boerman moved to Ghana and began working with Daniel in Accra. The church

would later move to the market area of Adabraka. Bro. Samuel Obeng came down from Kumasi and helped them hold their first gospel meeting. The church then moved to a residential area in Osu, meeting in a lower flat. In October of 1969, Daniel graduated from Ghana Bible College and moved to Accra to work full time with the church. In 1971 the church was able to acquire a large warehouse on Nsawam Road near Kwame Nkrumah Circle. This was converted into a meeting place and is presently the home of the Nsawam Road Church of Christ.

While the church was meeting in Adabraka, Christian Nsoah was converted. Some months later he invited Daniel and others from Ghana Bible College to come help him evangelize Tema, resulting in the church being established there. Christian took up the work, and for years the church met in a school in Community 4 before acquiring property in Community 6 and erecting their own meeting place. This congregation is now known as the Vertical Centre Church of Christ.

Over the years, through much hard work, the church continued to spread throughout the country. In 1986 an inter-denomination team conducted a survey of the various religious groups in Ghana. The Lord's church was placed in the category of non-Pentecostal churches. According to this survey and grouping, the churches of Christ were the fastest growing religious group in 8 regions and second fastest growing in a 9th region. At the time of the survey, we had not yet entered the 10th region.

Congregational leaders meeting in Ashaiman.

The following statistics represent the rate of growth for the churches of Christ in Ghana for the years 1977-1986:

Region	Growth Rate	Ranking
Ashanti	420%	1st
Brong-Ahafo	225%	2nd
Central	300%	1st
Eastern	680%	1st
Greater Accra	733%	1st
Northern	300%	1st
Upper East	300%	1st
Upper West	*1st church est. in 1987*	
Volta	733%	1st
Western	620%	1st

Churches of Christ are now found in every region and major city throughout the country. At present, it is estimated that there are over 3000 congregations with a combined membership around 700,000. Most of this tremendous growth can be contributed to the sacrificial and tireless zeal of our Ghanaian brothers and sisters in Christ.

PREACHER TRAINING

The training of Ghanaians to preach the gospel has played a significant role in the history and growth of the Lord's church in Ghana.

Edward and Veronica Quasah and family, preacher for the Boadua church.

Ghana Bible College (GBC) was established in Kumasi in 1961 and graduated its first 4 students in 1962. Brother Samuel Obeng served as principal of GBC for most of its existence until his retirement in 2002. Brother Augustine Tawiah, a former graduate of GBC, is the current president. GBC has 14 instructors and 9 other staff members. Since its establishment, it has graduated 800 students who are preaching in 10 countries. Currently there are 140 full-time and 60 part-time students.

In 1982 the National Bible Institute (NBI) was established under the oversight of the Nsawam Road church of Christ in Accra. The first 5 students graduated in 1984. NBI continued until in 2002, when Heritage Christian College (HCC) was formed. It is administered by a board that report to the elders of the Nsawam Road church who serve as trustees. HCC has a number of programs (1-4 years). After the first cycle, 61 students graduated from the various programs. HCC has now trained over 220 evangelists who are serving in 9 countries. Over 600 congregations have been established through the efforts of staff and students. Brother Samuel Twumasi-Ankrah is the Director of HCC. Samuel and three other instructors — Edward Quansah, Evans Lartey and Edward Owusu-Ansah — were all graduates of NBI who furthered their education and are now training others at HCC. Current enrollment is 26.

Niipaak Laar, baptizing converts in Nanyiar.

West Coast School of Preaching is located in Takoradi and has graduated 36 students.

MEDICAL CLINICS

The elders of the Bomso church of Christ in Kumasi oversee two medical clinics. The Church of Christ Mission Clinic in Kumasi was started in 1987. And the Church of Christ Mission Clinic in Yendi was opened in 1996. These clinics provide a number of services to their respective communities: outpatient services, mobile clinics to remote areas, primary health care training and wound care. Each clinic has an evangelist who works with the patients. At present, the clinic in Kumasi has a missionary nurse from Canada assisting the Ghanaian staff. The clinic in Yendi has an all Ghanaian staff directed by brother Peter Bombande. In addition to the services already mentioned, the clinic in Yendi also serves inmates at the local prison and residents of a nearby leper colony. Financial and other assistance

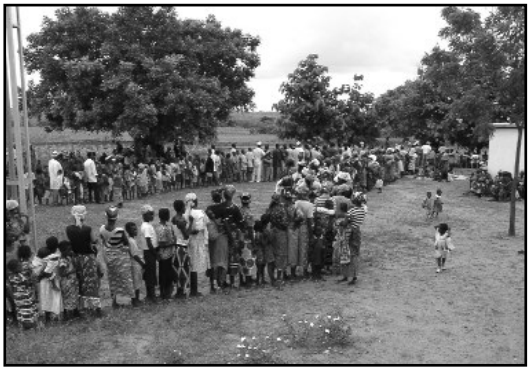
is provided by International Health Care Foundation in Searcy, Arkansas.

THE VILLAGE OF HOPE

The Village of Hope (VOH) was started by Christians in the United States and Ghana in 1989. Its mission was to care for orphaned, abandoned, destitute and needy children. Since its establishment many poor, hungry, homeless and hurting children have been cared for.

In Pauk, Togo, Niipaal Larr assisting Candy Bertinie, a Canadian nurse, with treatments in the clinic.

VOH is now located in Fetteh, an hour's drive west of Accra. It has a spacious campus with homes for the children and staff, Kindergarten, Primary, Junior Secondary & Senior Secondary Schools, clinic and a church building. Presently, VOH is caring for 235 children. 62 of these are living in 3 homes on the campus. Each of these homes has a mature Christian couple acting as house parents, caring for the children. VOH provides care for 49 more children who are living with Christian foster parents in several towns and villages throughout Ghana. In addition, 120 street children (70 boys and 50 girls) are being cared for by the VOH Street Children Program.



Long lines await treatment in the medical clinics, wherever they are offered.

These children are blessed to experience the love of Christ as demonstrated by their house parents and the entire staff at VOH. VOH not only provides food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care, but the children

are also being raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Over the years, a number of the children have become faithful Christians. They begin and end each day with a 30 minute devotional. The last time we visited, it was wonderful to see them laugh and learn, play and praise, and be raised in such a wholesome, spiritual environment.

Transportation of supplies for a clinic.

The Village of Hope is overseen by the elders at the Vertical Center Church of Christ. Fred Asare has been the director since its beginning. Financial and other assistance is provided by Ghana West Africa Missions in Searcy, Arkansas.

RURAL WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Three drilling rigs are used by Christians to drill wells in water-starved areas.

Rural Water Development Project (RWDP) began in 1987. This work is overseen by the elders of the Nsawam Road church of Christ. Brother Nathaniel Adams, Sr. is the Managing Director of RWDP. All of the staff and workers are members of the church. They have their offices located on the property of the Accra Road Church of Christ in Ashaiman. Currently RWDP has 3 well drilling rigs based in Yendi. RWDP has a team for each rig and so far they have drilled over 300 wells throughout Ghana. Most wells are drilled during the dry season (November-May) when it is easier to move the heavy equipment from one location to another, and there is a better chance of drilling wells that will pro-

duce water throughout the year. After the wells are drilled, another team goes back and pours a concrete pad and installs the hand pumps. There is also a maintenance team that periodically checks the wells, replacing seals, valves, etc. to make sure the pumps stay in good operating condition. This work is also assisted by Ghana West Africa Missions.

Concerned Christians make it possible for Ganaians to have deep bore wells.

LITERATURE AND CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

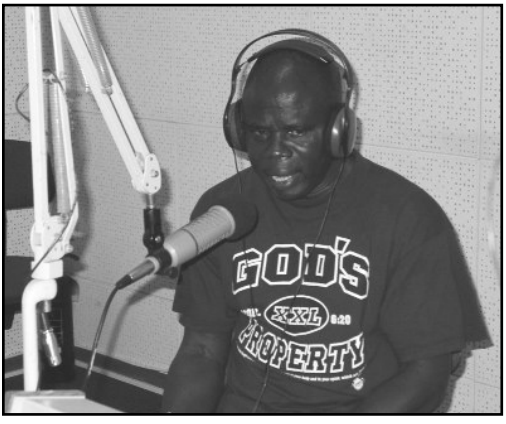
Some of the first materials to enter the country were a Bible Correspondence Course entitled "Studies in the Scriptures". World Bible School has also had a tremendous impact on teaching the Gospel and the growth of the church. Over the years, tons of tracts and materials have been sent from various congregations all over the world. World Evangelism has helped in shipping thousands of books to brethren in Ghana. In the mid 1980's brother J.C. Choate visited us a couple times in Tema and gave us permission to print a number of books. Tens of thousands of copies of the **Church of the Bible, New Testament Worship,** etc. were printed in-country and distributed. Many of these are still in use today.

Brethren in Ghana print materials in-country as they are able. However, the demand far outweighs the supply and there is still a tremendous need for good sound Bible materials to be provided for the work throughout the country.

RADIO PROGRAMS

When Ghana introduced privately owned FM stations, it provided an opportunity for the Gospel to be preached over the radio. Today there are approximately 10 radio programs operated by churches of Christ. One such broadcast is the Church of Christ Radio Programme on Adom FM in Tema.

This work is overseen by the elders of the Accra Road Church of Christ in Ashaiman. Brother Paul Addo is the regular speaker, preaching in the Akan language for 30 minutes each Sunday morning. This program is simultaneously broadcast on 11 sister stations throughout Ghana (covering 60-70% of Ghana's population), 2 Ghanaian radio stations in London; and streamed live over the internet. Hundreds have been led to Christ, and every Sunday many listeners visit churches of Christ as a result of the various radio works going on throughout the country.



Paul Addo preaches on Ghana Radio each Sunday to people throughout the country.

OTHER WORKS

The churches of Christ in Ghana are involved in numerous other good works. Many churches and some brethren operate schools to help educate children and provide a Christian foundation for them to build their lives upon. Churches regularly visit and provide assistance to orphan homes, hospitals and prisons. A number of prison ministries have been developed throughout the country. Churches also have active programs to teach and assist the deaf and disabled. Most congregations are also very active in personal evangelism.

SUMMARY

In 1980 Renee and I made our first trip to Ghana, participating in a 6-week campaign sponsored by the University Drive Church of Christ in Pontiac, Michigan. The result — our lives have never been the same. What a blessing to be personally involved in doing mission work and developing lifetime friendships with so many fine brethren, both here in the States and in Ghana. By mid 1981, Renee and I decided we would like to move to Ghana and work fulltime with our brethren there. In September, I made my second trip to Ghana, and in 1983, we made a survey trip with our son, Trevor, to prepare for our move in June 1984.

We spent the next two years at the Florida School of Preaching in Lakeland preparing ourselves for the work ahead of us. Again, the Lord blessed us with many new friends: instructors, fellow students and members from area congregations. While in school we worshiped with the Orange Street church, in Auburndale, Florida, which provided us with a home to live and helped us in so many ways. After graduation they sponsored our work while we lived in Ghana.

In 1984, we completed our studies, and in August, Renee and I, along with our son, Trevor, moved to Tema. While living in Ghana, we worshipped primarily with the church in Ashaiman, and through their evangelistic efforts helped to establish a number of new congregations. I also had the privilege to teach a number of fine men at the National Bible Institute overseen by Nsawan Road church in Accra. While living in Ghana, we were blessed with two more children, Trisha and Troy.

Each year Ted and Renee Wheeler lead a campaign team to Ghana and neighboring countries.

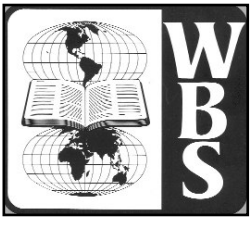
In 1989, we made the move back to the States and located with the church in Venice. Again, we were blessed to be surrounded by such wonderful Christians. Since 1989 we have continued to conduct annual campaigns to Ghana. During these campaigns, our emphasis is to build up local congregations and assist them in development and reaching out to nearby communities.

It is a real blessing to go back year after year and see congregations developing to the point that they are self-supporting, have appointed elders and deacons, have acquired property, put up buildings, started schools to educate children, are actively involved in benevolence, and continue to reach out and evangelize their nation. ✝

Ted Wheeler, minister for the Church of Christ of Venice, Venice, FL, and takes annual campaign groups to Ghana each July, doing work in Ghana, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Tanzania.

THERE IS NO TIME FOR APATHY IN CHURCHES OF CHRIST!

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONSIDER THESE GOOD WORKS; to subscribe, support, publicize, benefit from, and take advantage of what our brethren are doing to spread the message of Christ.



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Support the satellite cable network being developed by churches of Christ for the preaching of the Gospel throughout the USA and ultimately to the world. Send your contribution to GBN, P. O. Box 23604, Chattanooga, TN 37422. Log on to WWW.GBNTV.ORG

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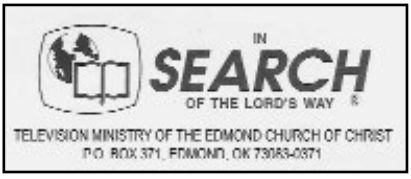
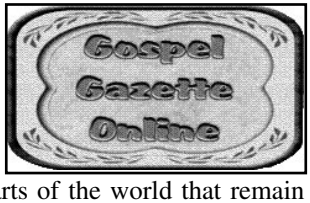


Mack Lyon's **SEARCH TV** programs are on **76 broadcast TV stations, 41 broadcast radio stations, 192 cable systems, and 5 satellite systems (Dish, GBN, American Life, DirecTV, and INSP).** Benefit from the lessons, support the preaching of the Gospel. **Phone: 800-321-8633; email: search@searchtv.org; Web site: www.searchtv.org.**

The oldest magazine in the brotherhood, Editor Neil Anderson has kept The Gospel Advocate true to the Biblical message, with attention to current issues and needs in the church. You will benefit greatly from its monthly infusion of truth. Phone: 800-251-8446; Web site:www.gospeladvocate.com

Restoration Radio Network International, led by Roy Beasley, uses shortwave radio to reach people in English, French, Philippine dialects, Spanish and Arabic, with a well-organized **"Apollos Follow-Up Program". Phone: 615 833-4771; Web site:www.rrni.org.** Help reach the masses through radio.



Gospel Gazette Online is a 20-page, monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by Louis and Bonnie Rushmore in 1999. Thousands of articles, written by faithful Christians, are archived and selectable through the onsite search engine. GGO is free to users throughout the world, and it is visited regularly even in parts of the world that remain virtually inaccessible to missionaries. **(www.gospelgazette.com)**

Apologetics Press has been the voice in churches of Christ for many years, speaking clearly, loudly, and Biblically on subjects pertaining to **Creation/Evolution, the Godhead, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and many other vital questions of faith.** Dave Miller has produced excellent DVDs on **The Silencing of God in America** and **The Quran. Phone: 800-234-8558; Web site: www.ApologeticsPress.org.**

What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?

✤ Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

✤ Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

✤ If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

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

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

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

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

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Dear Brethren:

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❒ I want to send $25.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed. Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way. Or you may send one payment of $300.00 per year for four issues. This will help us to send more cpoies to the mission fields.

❒ We want to give $_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.

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

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

The Voice of Truth International
Box 11218
Springfield, MO 65808
Att. Byron Nichols

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ZIP _____

Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. (Isaiah 43:1)

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also **Christ** is head of **the church**; and He is the Savior of **the body.**

Therefore, just as **the church** is subject to **Christ,** so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ** also **loved the church** and **gave Himself for her,** that He might **sanctify** and **cleanse her** with the **washing of water** by the **word,** that He might **present her to Himself *a glorious church,*** not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that **she should be holy and without blemish** (Ephesians 5:22-27).

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

Republic of Ghana

Government of Ghana:
Constitutional Democracy

Head of State and Government:
President: John Agyekum Kufuor

Secular Facts:

Location: West Africa, bordered on the west by Ivory Coast, on the north by Burkina Faso, Togo on the East, and the Gulf of Guinea, the Atlantic Ocean on the South.

Land Mass: 92,098 sq. miles.

Capital: Accra, 2,825,800 population.

Population: 23,382,848.

Language: English, African languages including Akan, Ewe.

Literacy Rate: 75%.

Religion: Christianity: 68.8%; Islam: 15.9%; indigenous beliefs: 8.5% .

Ethnic Groups: Black African, 98.5%; European, 1.5 %. Tribal groups: Akan 44%, Moshi-Dagomba 16%, Ewe 13%, Ga 8%.

Economy: **Industries**: mining, lumbering, light manufacturing, aluminum smelting, food processing, cement; **Chief Crops**: cocoa, rice, cassava, peanuts, corn, millet, pepper, shea nuts, bananas; timber.

Life expectancy: Men: 58.7 yrs, women: 60.4 yrs; Infant mortality, 52.31 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Communications: TV, Radio, Telephone, Newspapers, Internet users, 650,000.

Monetary Units: New Cedi.

The Church:

Congregations: App. 3,000.

Christians: 700,000.

History: The church of Christ was established in Ghana in 1960. John Gaidoo was the first convert in the city of Kumasi. Other early converts were Samuel Obeng (Kumasi), Daniel Ampadu-Asiamah (Accra) and Christian Nsoah (Tema).

The first missionaries were Jerry & Jean Reynolds and Dewayne & Jane Davenport. Ted and Renee Wheeler joined the work in 1984 and continue with annual campaigns.

Programs of outreach: Ghana Bible College, Heritage Christian College, West Coast School of Preaching; Rural Water Development; Village of Hope; Clinics; Numerous schools (K-12, technical, etc.)

The People: Ghanians are very spiritual people. From the time of the first convert, there have been great indigeneous efforts to teach the lost and plant new churches. Many of the congregations number into the hundreds of members, with elders and deacons taking the leadership in social aid programs as well as in evangelism. In this, they are exemplary.

Front Cover: **The children of Ghana.**