

V **THE** **VOICE OF TRUTH** **INTERNATIONAL**



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International
Gospel Hour
from 1934.



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Gospel Hour
from 1995.



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fund-raiser and
co-speaker currently.

We're So Blessed

Maurice Hall via Keynoter

- If you own just one Bible, you are abundantly blessed. One third of all the world does not have access to even one.
- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.
- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.
- If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.
- If your parents are still married and alive, you are very rare, even in the United States.
- If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.
- If you can hold someone's hand, hug them, or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed.
- If you prayed yesterday and today, you are blessed because you believed in God's willingness to hear and answer prayer.
- If you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and have learned of His way of salvation, you are part of a small minority in the world.
- If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two million people in the world who cannot read anything at all.

Taken from Warners Chapel Church of Christ bulletin October 20, 2013

Characteristics of A Great Church

A Sharing People
Philippians 4:14-16



A Loving People
Philippians 1:9-10

**A Humble,
Submissive,
Servant-Hearted
People**
Philippians 2:4-8



A Righteous People
Philippians 1:11

A Growing People
Philippians 3:12-16

A Pure People
Philippians 4:18

A Unified People
Philippians 1:27-28

**A Pilgrim-Minded
People**
Philippians 1:9-10

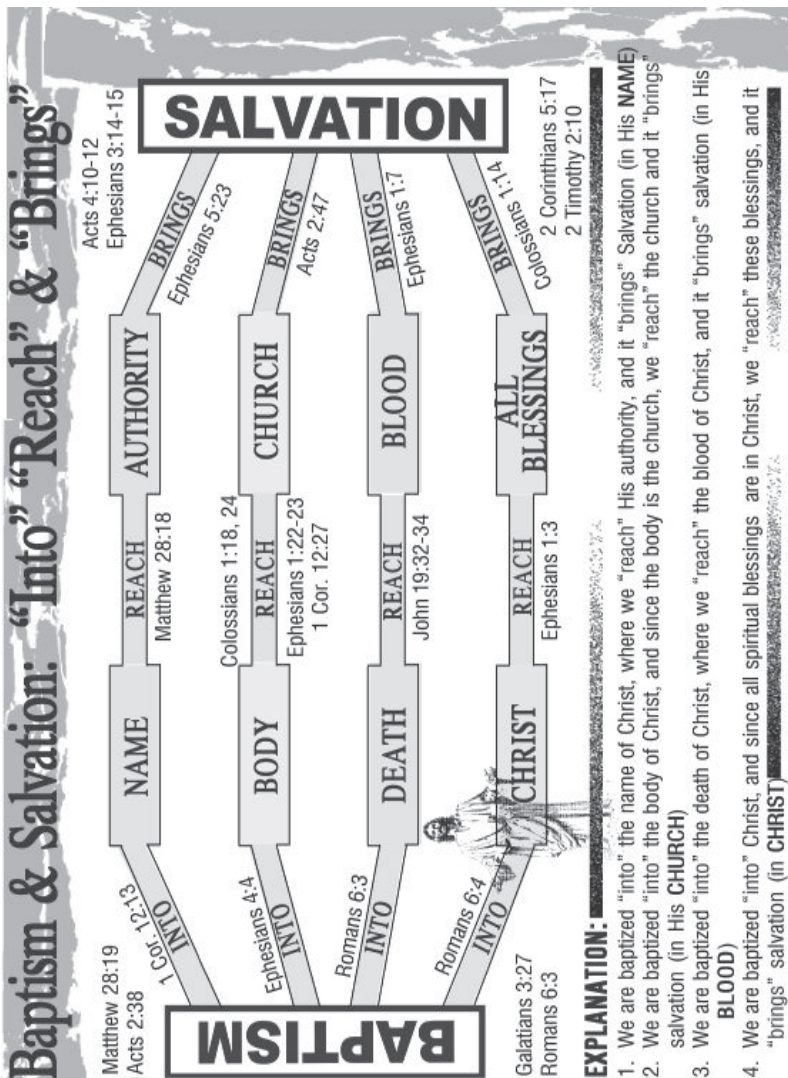
A Looking People
Philippians 3:20

An Obedient People
Philippians 2:12-13

A Prayerful People
Philippians 4:4-7

A Faithful People
Philippians 1:10





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



The Lord has always intended that His church be a unified group, a family, a busy band of people using their wide variety of capabilities in service for their Master, a support group for all its members, a believing and obedient company of people, disciples committed to learning and doing the will of its Founder and Head, and on and on the descriptive list could go, all in an effort to give a comprehensive view of the church as intended in the mind of the Deity.

As we learn from the Scriptures more and more about the church, we see clearly that the church in its mature form is made of both leaders and followers.

Godly Leaders and Followers: Both Are Essential

Byron Nichols

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), but for the church to be what it was meant to be would require leadership. Thus, He tried to prepare His apostles to be the ones who would provide that leadership. The apostles were significantly involved with the Lord before the church came into existence, but not at all to the same degree and in the same ways that they were once Jesus returned to heaven. However, this tremendous responsibility that Christ gave to them was modified considerably in His keeping His promise to provide great guidance for them by means of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Notice especially Christ's words in John 14:16,17,26: *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you...But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your*

remembrance all things that I said to you.” Other pertinent verses include John 15:26 and 16:7,8, 13-15. Their task would not be easy, but it would be made possible as long as they were attentive to the Spirit’s guidance and applied that guidance to leading the church into being the true spiritual body of Christ.

As the Lord blessed the leadership efforts of the apostles, thousands of people allowed themselves to be called by the Gospel (1 Corinthians 4:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:14). Over time many of these converts matured in the faith to the extent that they grew ready to assume roles of responsibility and leadership in the church. The Book of Acts and the epistles which followed provide us with evidence that the apostles taught the church about the specific leadership role of elders (also identified as bishops, shepherds, overseers, pastors, and presbyters). In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we find inspired guidelines to be adhered to in the selection and function of those to be elders, etc. It remains true today that congregations engage in their most crucial decisions when they select from their number men to serve the Lord’s church as elders. Qualified leaders are critical to the faithfulness and success of the body of Christ.

It is a simplistic but true statement that in order for leaders to lead there must of necessity be those who will follow. Hopefully we can all see that the church cannot be what Christ wants it to be if it is lacking in capable and qualified leaders. However, we must also see that it is imperative that the church be filled with members who are confident that they too can be quite pleasing to the Lord by being humble servants who willingly submit to the leadership of the elders as they also submit to the guidance of the Lord and His Word.

The early church had its courageous and gifted leaders, but it also thrived because of the men and women who were just as dedicated to the Lord, but who were not in leadership positions. Can you imagine the degree of strength and success that the infant church would have had if it had all been left up to those leaders, the apostles and the elders? The church grew numerically and spiritually because of the sacrificial service of Christians of little prominence, men and women such as Epaphras, Phoebe, Cornelius, Persis, Aquila and Priscilla, Ephaphroditus, Stephanas, Lydia, Dorcas, and Demetrius, plus the host of faithful followers whose names are known only by God.

Although the Bible clearly shows that the church is to be made up of both leaders and followers, there are some interesting facts to be noticed: First, no one can truly be a leader in Christ’s church if he refuses to also be a follower. Second, by the same token, followers frequently also provide marvelous leadership as others are influenced positively by their display of humility and joyful service.

It is indeed essential that the Lord’s church have both godly leaders and followers.





The Temple of God

Jerry Bates

Many Christians think we no longer have a temple, which is true as far as a physical building is concerned. However, we do have a temple, albeit a spiritual temple. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul wrote, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.”* Notice Paul said we as Christians

compose the temple of God. Spiritually, God dwells in us individually and corporately in the church. This means that no physical building makes up the temple; thus, we must not somehow think of the church building as a holy place. The people of the ancient world were very familiar with temples. Jerusalem had the Jewish temple, and every pagan city had many temples, especially Corinth. What are some lessons we can draw from the fact that the church is the temple of God?

The church is the meeting place of God and man. In Exodus 29:42,43 Moses wrote that God would meet man in the tabernacle. When the temple replaced the tabernacle, the temple became the meeting place. Since the church is the new temple, the church is now the meeting place of God. Thus, we must be in the church, not a physical building, but the spiritual church, in order to meet with God. If we want to meet God, then we must be in the church.

The church is also the dwelling place of God. We have already noticed that the Spirit of God dwells in us. A similar statement is made in Ephesians 2:22, *“In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”* *“... For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people”* (2 Corinthians 6:16). God wants to have fellowship with man, and we should want to have fellowship with God. However, if we are going to have fellowship with God, then again, we must be in the church.

The church is also a place of worship. In 1 Peter 2:5 Peter wrote, *“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up*

spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” It was in the temple that the Jews went to worship God and to offer their sacrifices. Likewise, we worship God and offer spiritual sacrifices in the church. *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him”* (John 4:23). God wants His servants to worship Him, yet in order to worship Him we must be in the church. Notice the importance of the church. If we are going to meet God, have fellowship with God, or truly worship God, then we must be in the church. This makes the church extremely important, does it not?

How do we enter the church? *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The body is the church (Ephesians 1:22,23); thus, we are baptized into the church, the place where we meet God.

We also must realize that *“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, whose temple you are”* (1 Corinthians 3:17). This is a most solemn warning. This becomes plain when we consider how serious God was about keeping the Old Testament temple pure. God gave very specific instructions regarding how to build the temple and who could enter the temple. All the vessels of the temple had to be sanctified with blood, and the priests had to be cleansed. God commanded that all should *“reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord”* (Leviticus 10:30). *“But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord”* (Numbers 19:20). If God was this concerned about keeping the physical sanctuary holy, how much more concerned is He regarding the holiness of His spiritual sanctuary.

We must be careful to keep God’s temple or sanctuary holy. We do not defile it by physical impurity as in the old temple, but we can defile it by spiritual impurity. Such would include continually practicing any sin, especially sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:19,20) or bringing any unauthorized practice or service into God’s sanctuary.

Another sin which defiles God’s temple is division. This might be surprising to many, but Paul wrote, *“But you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men”* (1 Corinthians 3:3)? Certainly, nothing carnal or worldly should enter the sanctuary. Yet, it is not at all uncommon to hear of divisions in the church, strife, envy, or jealousy among brethren. When we allow divisions and strife to enter the church, we are defiling God’s temple, and God will destroy us (1 Corinthians 3:17).

When we defile the temple, God will no longer dwell in it, and we are left alone with no place to meet God. Surely, we do not want that to happen; therefore, we must be certain that nothing unholy enters the church. *“Because it is written, Be holy for I am holy.”* (1 Peter 1:16) †



The Nuts and Bolts of Pornography

Louis Rushmore

The word “pornography” means, “the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement” (*Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*). It comes from the compound Greek word, “pornographos,” “porne” meaning “prostitute,” “whore” or “harlot” and “grapho” meaning “to write”. The word “pornography” entered the English language in about 1864. It is no wonder, then, that the word did not appear in the earliest English translations of the Bible, which predate 1864. Although subsequent translations of the Bible do not include the word “pornography” either, biblical instruction definitely warns against it.

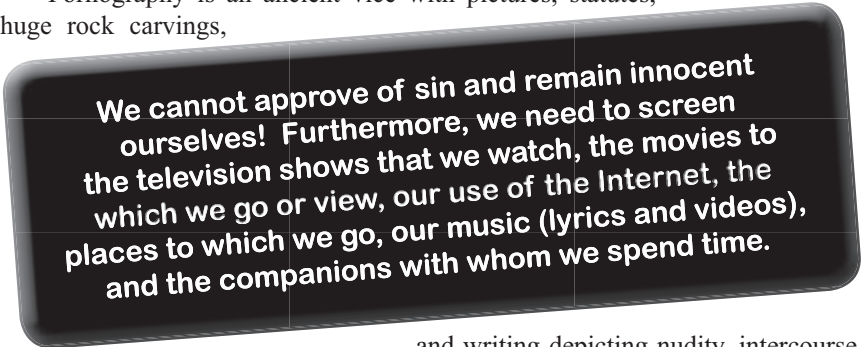
First though, let’s attempt to quantify “pornography” so that we can see more clearly the scope of its reach and affect. Generally, pornography is typically categorized as “soft porn” and “hardcore porn”. Hardcore pornography is a worldwide exploding epidemic, but so-called soft pornography has already completely saturated especially western culture to the point that nearly **everything** advertised is marketed with some degree of sex appeal (e.g., hamburgers, jewelry, clothes, cars). Movies, music videos, video games, magazines, books, and the Internet are awash with soft and hardcore pornography. Pornography of some degree is so plentiful that it is not uncommon for children or adults to come in contact with it even involuntarily. As long as pornography continues to be big business (billions of dollars annually) and to appeal to the baser side of humanity (mostly to men but to many women, too), it will continue to reshape both individuals and society in the mold of wickedness away from the “*good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Romans 12:1-2 NKJV).

In addition, pornography desensitizes men and women about the interpersonal,

reciprocal sexual relationship that God designed for one man and one woman alone within the bounds of God-approved, lifelong marriage (Genesis 2:24,25; Matthew 19:4-6,9). Pornography hijacks the true beauty of physical intimacy between a husband and a wife (Song of Solomon 4:5; Proverbs 5:18-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5), relegating it merely to compassionless physical activity with no moral significance, which furthermore, has as its only object carnal pleasure. Through pornography, men and women and children are degraded to the status of tools as though they were mere inanimate objects with no greater value. Pornography changes individuals adversely and has scandalously altered western culture, too.

Some estimates state that up to 10% of the Internet is comprised of pornography, and that 25% of web searches daily are for pornography. High percentages of men and women to a lesser degree engage in pornography regularly through various media and find nothing wrong with consuming it and being consumed by it. The plague of pornography cuts across all demographics (e.g., race, politics, religions, education levels, economic brackets, etc.); no one is immune from its allurements or from its pervasiveness. Frequently prepubescent children encounter some form of pornography innocently, which happenstances can never be entirely undone.

Pornography is an ancient vice with pictures, statues, huge rock carvings,



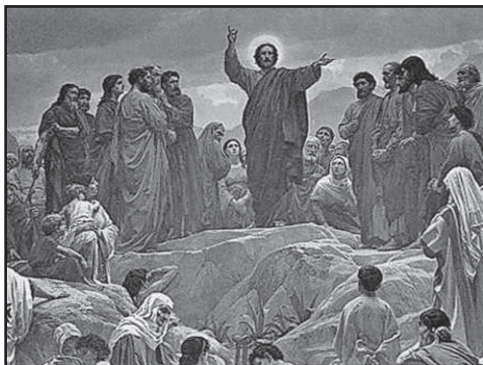
We cannot approve of sin and remain innocent ourselves! Furthermore, we need to screen the television shows that we watch, the movies to which we go or view, our use of the Internet, the places to which we go, our music (lyrics and videos), and the companions with whom we spend time.

and writing depicting nudity, intercourse, and sexual perversions. Only contemporary technology and media have modernized the venues and the ease with which pornography is viewed. The devices have changed, but mankind is the same—corrupted through the same three avenues of sin by which men have always been allured (1 John 2:16). Pornography is infectious and resistant to expulsion; it dulls the perception of reality and has altered the conscience of the world.

Biblical principles would have us expunge from our lives pornography and be on guard against its appeal. For instance, Jesus said, *“But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you;*

for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:28,29).

Our Lord’s words strike at the heart of pornography—“*lust*”! He also indicated the nature of viewing women in such a way; it is a precursor to the physical sin of adultery. Then, Jesus underscored the seriousness of lust with the hyperbole (exaggeration) in such instances of gouging out one’s own eye if that’s what it takes to avoid that sin. Visual sexual excitement outside of marriage is forbidden!



Visual sexual excitement outside of marriage is forbidden!

From the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:28,29 above as well as from Mark 7:21-23, it becomes clear that one does not have to perform explicit, physical acts to commit sin, but one can commit sin internally—within his or her own mind. *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”* However, we also commit sin when we approve the sinful activities of others (Romans 1:32), and no truly pious person would dismiss as spiritually inconsequential various gradations of public undress to fornication, adultery and every conceivable manifestation of carnal debauchery. **We cannot approve of sin and remain innocent ourselves!**

We must *“flee sexual immorality”* (1 Corinthians 6:18), which implicitly would preclude our appreciation of it acted out by others. We must bring *“every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5), and we must choose to *“mediate”* on *“anything praiseworthy”*. *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things”* (Philippians 4:8).

We need to police ourselves to view the world and its enticements, not through the corrupted lenses of ungodliness, but instead as Almighty God views them. **We need to screen the television shows that we watch, the movies to which we go or view, our use of the Internet, the places to which we go, our music (lyrics and videos), and the companions with whom we spend time.** It may be necessary for us to reevaluate what we perceive as beautiful to coincide with what God deems as lovely and honorable. †

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Measures of the Spirit

J.C. Choate (Deceased)

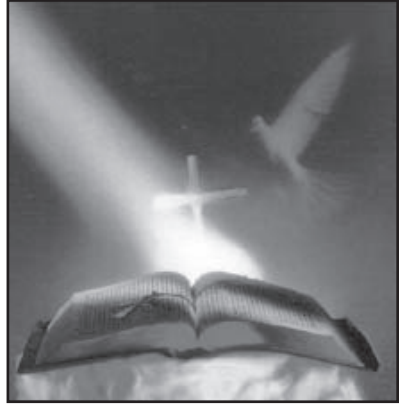
The apostle John said of Christ, *“For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him”* (John 3:34).

What does John mean when he talks about God giving the Spirit to Christ without measure? Measure would imply limitation. In other words, had God given Christ only “a measure” of the Spirit that would have meant that He would have been limited as to what He could do, even through the power of the Spirit. But God did not give Him the Spirit *“by measure”*, but *“without”* measure. That means that neither God nor the Spirit would place any restrictions on Him when it came to the use of the power of the Spirit.

Continuing, if God gave the Spirit to Christ without measure, that would of necessity imply that the Spirit was given to others *“by measure”*. And, indeed, this is what happened. These included the apostles, the ones on whom they laid their hands, and all who have been baptized into Christ.

Our Lord, receiving the Spirit without measure, was able to do miracles, including casting out devils and raising the dead, calming the stormy seas, turning water into wine, walking upon water, etc. In addition to all of these, John wrote, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name”* (John 20:30,31).

But perhaps even beyond everything else was the fact that Jesus had the authority to bestow the power of the Holy Spirit on others. He alone could *baptize* the apostles with the Holy Spirit. The apostles were given the power to *lay their hands upon certain disciples* that they might have *a miraculous measure* of the Spirit, but they could not *baptize* anyone with the Spirit. Furthermore, those who received the laying-on-of-hands measure of the Holy Spirit by the apostles could



GOD

not pass that power on to others. How do we know these things? The Scriptures clearly tell us, if we pay attention to what is written.

So, let's take a look at those who received the measures of the Spirit.

There are many who believe that all of the Lord's people, from the apostles right on down to the Christians of our day, received or should receive *the baptismal measure* of the Holy Spirit. Many even pray for that baptism! We are going to see that this is not a valid expectation.

First of all, keep in mind that Christ promised to send the Comforter or the Holy Spirit upon the apostles only. He did not make this promise to all of His followers of that day or to all who would follow Him in the future.

When we turn to the book of John, we read, "*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father; he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning*" (John 15:26,27).

Again, He said, "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you*" (John 16:7).

Going on, He said, "*Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come*" (John 16:13). Now, to whom was the Lord speaking in these verses? If you will read the context, and notice what Jesus is saying, it is very obvious that He is speaking to His apostles, to those who had been with Him from the beginning (John 15:27). The question, then, is this: Did the Lord keep His promise?

Before we see what finally happened, please consider these statements Christ made to the apostles just prior to His return to the Father in heaven: "*And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24:49). Could this statement apply to anyone living today? Of course not!

Luke wrote this also: "*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: to whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; and being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly*"

GOD

baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:1-5).

Then Jesus said, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8).* Surely we can see in these statements that Jesus promised the apostles the power of the Holy Ghost. That being true, **who** received it? The apostles only, or all believers in general?

In Acts 2 we read, *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).* Reading on through that chapter, we see the apostles preaching to a large crowd of people. Approximately 3,000 of them obeyed the Gospel, and on being saved, they were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47).

We also have this statement: *“And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done **by the apostles**” (Acts 2:43).*

Continuing to read to the fifth chapter of Acts (verse 12), the specification is again made concerning those who were doing miracles: *“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people.”* The conclusion, then, is that only the apostles received the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit.

But they were only twelve in number and there was much to do. In the next chapter, Acts 6, the apostles asked the disciples to choose from among them seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. The fact that they were **“full of the Holy Ghost”**, and yet that they did not have the power to do any miracles shows us that it was a non-miraculous measure of the Spirit that was given to each person at the time of his baptism into Christ. As we continue our study, we will learn about this measure that all Christians receive upon their baptism.

When these seven men were selected by the church, the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them that they might receive the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. Now, remember, these men were already full of the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit. What was the difference between what they had received at their baptism, as promised in Acts 2:38 [*“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and*

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you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit''' and what they now received through prayer and the laying on of the apostles' hands? Acts 2 shows that it was only the apostles who received the baptismal measure of the Spirit (Acts 1:26-2:1-4), so we know that these seven had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit. However, at the time of their baptism in water, in their obedience to the Lord, they had received the non-miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit as promised to all converts in Acts 2:38. Now, as specially selected men, they received the laying-on-of-hands measure of the Spirit, that only the apostles could bestow. This enabled them to do certain miraculous works by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, let it be understood that there is only one measure of the Holy Spirit today and it is the non-miraculous measure that is given to all who obey the Lord. We will discuss these matters further in following lessons. †

J.C. Choate began publication of *The Voice of Truth International* in 1993.

Measures of the Spirit

1. The unlimited measure: *"For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for **God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him**"* (John 3:34). There was no limit to what Christ was able to do through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. The baptismal measure: *but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence**"* (Acts 1:1-5). The Spirit empowered the Apostles to perform miracles, to speak by inspiration, to give miraculous powers to others.

3. The Laying-on-of-hands measure: Acts 6: the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them that they might receive the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

4. The indwelling measure, the non-miraculous measure, the indwelling from the time of baptism. *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**"* (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Romans 8:12-28; Ephesians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19).

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The Wrath of God

Betty Burton Choate

We humans are made in the image of God. Many things are included in this description. We are made in His image in the sense of being immortal souls, in likeness to His eternal essence. We can think, talk, make judgments, learn and grow in knowledge and abilities. We feel the emotions of love, peace, happiness, pain, anger. We know right from wrong, good from evil. And as Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, *“He has put eternity in our hearts.”*

I seldom go to a theater for a movie, but from the coverage I had seen of a new film called, **“Son of God”**, I decided to see that one, prepared to get up and walk out, mid-movie, if the literary license became blasphemous. [I don’t understand why any writer or film-maker would blatantly change the story-line from what the Scriptures say; certainly, no man is going to be able to improve on the inspired record!] Anyway, I went, and though there were minor variants from Scripture [it was shot in Morocco, and the tomb is pictured as being in a mountainous-type place instead of in a garden...], the message itself was powerfully portrayed. I cried a lot, sometimes from joy, sometimes from thanksgiving at the love and compassion shown, sometimes from grief at the horrors inflicted on Jesus. The betrayal, trials, and crucifixion.



As I watched the very graphic portrayal of what our Lord must have endured — the mockery, the brutality, the outright meanness of heart of his tormenters — I felt the “push back” tighten up inside me. And I thought, “When they were doing those horrible, blasphemous things, He could have just wiped them off the face of the earth with one breath! What strength He had to exercise to endure such atrocities at the hands of evil, degenerate worms!”

And I remembered that God has emotions too. The Scriptures mention His anger more than 200 times, sometimes adding the adjective “fierce”. On one occasion, because of the rebellion of the Israelites, *“...the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this*

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people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them”” (Exodus 32:9,10).

Watching the portrayal of the trial and crucifixion, my insides knotted up and I wondered, “How could God bear to see such meanness done to His Son? How could He have refrained from just consuming them, as He had wanted to do to Israel?”

And then I thought, “That was what Satan was trying to do — to push God to the point that those evil men who were crucifying His Son would have been annihilated!” **And in the process, the one means of saving those who would love and obey Him would have been eradicated!**

Of course, God knows all things, and He was not about to let Satan win that victory. So Jesus endured whatever they did to Him — and God endured the horror of seeing and feeling all of it done to His only Son. But at the last, He covered the world with blackness for three hours (Matthew 27:45), and then, when Jesus cried out, “*It is finished*” and committed His Spirit to God, a tremendous upheaval took place:

The Scriptures record this, as do some secular historians:

Evidence from the Roman historian Phlegon:

“In the 4th year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was a great eclipse [Greek = EKLIPSIS] of the Sun, greater than had ever been known before, for at the 6th hour the day was changed into night and the stars were seen in the heavens. An earthquake occurred in Bythinia and overthrew a great part of the city of Nicaea.”

The historian Thallus in 52 A.D.:

“On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down.”

Archaeological digs confirm the effects of the earthquake:

“Varves, which are annual layers of deposition in the sediments, reveal that at least two major earthquakes affected the core: a widespread earthquake in 31 B.C. and an early first century seismic event that happened sometime between 26 A.D. and 36 A.D.” [from “News” by Jennifer Viegas]

Now, salvation had been assured—the sacrifice of blood had been made — and God’s response did two things: the immediate traumatic upheaval of the earthquake convinced even the hardened Roman centurion: “*Truly this was the Son of God*” (Matthew 27:54); and it surely must have been evidence of the release of God’s pent-up anger at the horror of what men had done to His Son. But He didn’t kill them all, as they deserved — He let them live. And according to Peter’s message in Acts 2, some of those who had cried so vehemently, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” were the first ones to be cleansed in baptism by that blood! †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate and a co-worker with the World Evangelism team in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

GOD

The Hand of God

Bobby Dockery

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save...” (Isaiah 59:1).



The expression *“hand of God”* is found often in Scripture and is also used in many of our hymns. God’s hand is seen in so many marvelous ways:

The Hand of Creation. The hand of God created the world in which we live. We are living in an age of atheism and infidelity. The Bible account of creation is denied in leading newspapers and magazines, and even in the textbooks of our schools. Where did the world come from? There is but one answer: God’s omnipotent voice spoke, and His hand moved, and the universe came into existence. *“Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands”* (Psalm 102:25).

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“In reason’s ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine.”

The Hand of Providence. The hand that made us is also the hand which sustains us. *“In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind”* (Job 12:10). Of a certainty, we may know that God’s hand is in it all! The hand of providence is a hand of blessing and protection: *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1). *“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow”* (James 1:17). His hands have repeatedly opened the windows of heaven and poured forth abundant gifts to mankind (Malachi 3:10).

The Hand of Salvation. Man rebelled against the loving hand of God and sinned. *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (Romans 5:12; See Genesis 3:1-6). But God in His mercy desires to save the sinner. He stands with outstretched hands inviting the sinner to come to Him. *“All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people”* (Romans 10:21). The ministry of Jesus was the ultimate demonstration of God’s outstretched hand of entreaty to a lost world. (See Matthew 11:28). But God does not save without the sinner’s consent, which is evidenced by his acceptance of God’s hand of salvation by obeying the Gospel of Christ.

“From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me;
From shades of night to plains of light,
O praise His name, He lifted me.”

In Shakespeare’s play *Henry V*, there is a conversation between King Henry and the Earl of Gloucester before the Battle of Agincourt in which Henry soothes Gloucester’s fears that the French will attack before the English forces are ready. Gloucester says, “I hope they will not come upon us now.” To which King Henry replies, “We are in God’s hands, brother, not in theirs” (Act 3, Scene 6). May God give us faith to say the same! ☩

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

Physical Evidence for the Flood

David Everson



The worldwide flood of Noah's time changed the appearance of the world forever! Second 2 Peter 3:5 says that "*...the world that then was perished...*". The world that Noah and his family stepped into after their time on the ark looked nothing like the one in which they had lived prior to the deluge. What physical evidence can we look at today to see that the world was covered by water? Let's examine some of the evidence that would appear to have been left by the flood, but since no one alive today saw the pre-flood world, it is all speculation.

First, ninety percent of the earth's surface is covered by sedimentary rock. This is the type of rock that is formed by water. Sandstone, limestone, conglomerates, etc. are all present in very large quantities on the surface. When we build a new road through the mountains, cut clefts and expose rock layers,

EVIDENCES

most often they are sedimentary. This type of rock is so common that it is very likely that most people have never seen any other type of rock. Now the skeptics say that some of these rocks could not be formed in a flood, but they still say that water was necessary, and during the flood, we had plenty of water!

Second, the abundance of fossils is another strong evidence for a worldwide flood. This has been one of my favorite hobbies over the past 15 years, and my basement shows it. I have lugged rocks containing evidence of life from the past from all over the United States and am infinitely fascinated by its existence. Fossil formation requires very unique conditions. An animal must be buried in mud or sand very rapidly to get away from the decomposing effects of bacteria and other decomposers. We all know what happens to a tree that falls over in the woods — it rots! Yet, the rock out of which I blasted the basement for my house contains huge numbers of tree fossils, all sizes, lying at all angles and leaving a very nice impression in the sandstone rock surrounding it. How could this happen on such a huge scale — especially since today the process of fossil formation does not happen often at all? Well, I believe that the sudden covering of the earth with water, and the erosion that would have accompanied it would provide the unique conditions needed for fossil formation.

Third, the volcanic activity around the world gives evidence of the flood. The “*fountains of the great deep*” were broken open. This would have caused vast exposures of the interior layers of the earth to the surface, hence giving great amounts of volcanic activity. The earth is ringed by active volcanoes even today — giving the evidence of a very dynamic disturbance on the surface of the earth.

Fourth, geologic unconformities give evidence of the flood. Geologic unconformities are where the rock strata do not show the expected or predicted structures — vast areas of “older” rock sitting on top of “younger” rock, in overthrust vaults. Rock strata nowhere on the surface of the earth are “complete” as geologists predict. Where did the missing layers go? What about polystratic fossils — those fossils that span several layers of the earth’s structure? How could a tree stand for millions of years without decomposing?

Fifth, what about the coal, oil, and natural gas that are being found today? Would not burial of vast amounts of plants and animals by a flood before they rotted be a reasonable explanation?

Well, I for one believe that these and many, many other pieces of evidence support the account of a worldwide flood that destroyed the world. †

David Everson is an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA, and has many years of education in biology.

THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Learned

Dan Jenkins

In the last nine years I've coached boys and girls, ages 6 to 14 in football, baseball, and basketball, and I've learned a lot. Some of it has been fun, and some of it sad. I've learned you can take a time-out in a game for restroom breaks. I've learned children can have an awful short attention span, or as one fellow put it: "In coaching, the first 1,000 times you tell a child something, it doesn't count." I've learned children can fight one minute and be best friends the next. I've learned if you give a child, even a troubled child, quality attention, he loves you. I've learned a home run or a touchdown is more important to some parents than how their children perceive themselves. I've learned that for some people winning is everything, and I, too, can sometimes get caught up in that mentality. I've learned there are a lot of politics even in little league sports. And I've learned that most umpires, referees, and officials are, in fact, blind. (Just thought I'd throw that one in to see if you were still reading.)

Last week I attended a coaches' meeting for Dixie Youth Baseball and learned something else. If you've never been to one of these rules meetings or times when the coaches "draft" teams, you've really missed out. But it's never a pretty sight, and I just hope the Lord doesn't return while I'm in one of those sessions.

I walked in late and the temperature was already rising. A decidedly heated discussion was going on. Two of the "grown" men (at least they were in their forties) were going at it over a rule. One wanted to bypass the rule in the *Official Rules Book for Dixie Youth Baseball* and the other obviously didn't. Finally, one of them stood up (the one wanting to follow the rule book). He held the book up and he said something like this: "If we want to play Dixie Youth Baseball, the rule is already decided. If we want to play by our own rules, we can, but it won't be Dixie Youth Baseball, and we can't be in their tournaments. The rule is here. If we don't want to follow it completely, we might as well just throw the book away." Well, that ended the discussion.

I quickly switched from coach to Christian and took note. If the world would deal with religion with almost the exact words that this fellow dealt with Dixie Youth Baseball, we'd have religious unity and peace, and it would do away with most of the confusion in the religious world. Re-read his words with some very slight revisions to make it apply to religion: "If we want to be a church, the rules are already decided. If we want to play by our rules, we can, but it won't be the Lord's church and we can't be in His kingdom. The rules are here. If we don't want to follow them completely, we might as well just throw the Book away. ✠

Dan Jenkins preaches for the church of Christ in West Palm Beach, Florida, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD

Not By Bread Alone!

Perry N. Hall

“But He answered and said, ‘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). You will recognize these words of Jesus as His response to one of the temptations of Satan, shortly after the Lord’s obedience in baptism. Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights and had grown very hungry. Capitalizing on this condition, Satan sought to seize the moment, seeking to plant doubt in the mind of Christ. The evil one has used this method since the garden. *“Hath God said?”* So he comes to us with his evil whispers, seeking to breathe doubts into our souls — doubts of the truth of God’s revelation, doubts of God’s love and power, doubts of our own standing before God. But we must steadfastly resist him that he might flee from us (James 4:7).

Hunger is one of the greatest drives found in man. *“Command that these stones be made bread.”* Bread is an essential food to man’s physical well-being. Jesus recognized this in His response to the devil, but He also knew that there are some things more important than bread — our victory over Satan, our relationship to God. *“It is written.”* Here we have the first recorded words of Jesus following His baptism. He was the mighty Son of God, the Creator of the universe, full of the Holy Spirit. He begins His earthly ministry with the profound, but simple words, *“It is written.”* He meets Satan head-on with the sword of the Spirit. So we must now. Our hearts and minds must be saturated with the Word of God, our memories filled with a *“thus saith the Lord”*. The Word, hidden in our hearts that we might not sin against God, will be at hand in the hour of trial and temptation. We meet the evil one as a “man” who does not live by bread alone and we defeat Satan because we live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Satan comes to us with his evil whispers, seeking to breathe doubts into our souls—doubts of the truth of God’s revelation, doubts of God’s love and power, doubts of our own standing before God.

For this reason, our elders, teachers, and preachers encourage our daily study of God’s Word and our participation in all our Bible classes and worship periods.

Christ is the bread of life. His words are spirit, and they are life. We will lose our lives if we seek only the earthly bread. If we eat of Him, we will never hunger and will live forever (John 6:35, 50-51). †

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

THE WORD OF GOD INFORMATION - INSPIRATION - OR TRANSFORMATION?

Carroll Sites

The Bible is for our transformation!

Many books have been written. Solomon wrote, *“Of making of many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh”* (Ecclesiastic 12:12). Then there is “THE BOOK”, the Bible. Some books are for our information; some for our inspiration; the Bible is for our **transformation**.

All of our lives need to be transformed. Paul writes to the Roman Christians, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12:1,2).

Transform means a change in form or appearance; a change in character; change into another. Synonymous to “transform” is to “convert”. Peter said to lost sinners, *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . .”* (Acts 3:19). Paul declared, *“Truly, the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent”* (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a change of mind — a change of the will (Matthew 21:28-32). When we start changing our mind about some things, we begin a transformation in our life!

How do you read your Bible? Just for information? Just for inspiration? Or for transformation? James writes, *“ . . . receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”* (James 1:21). Study and obey the Bible — it will change your life! ✚

Carroll Sites is an elder and preacher for the Lord’s church in Higden, Arkansas, USA.

The Tree of Bible Facts

Selected

THE WORD OF GOD

THE
Bible has
in it 3,566,480
letters, 810,677
words, 1189 chapters
and 66 Books. The
longest chapter is the
119th Psalm. The shortest
and middle chapter is the
117th Psalm. The middle
verse is the 8th verse of the
18th Psalm. The longest name
is in the 8th chapter of Isaiah

verse 1, and contains 18 letters. The
word “and” occurs 46,627 times; the word
“Lord” 1,855 times. The 37th chapter of
Isaiah and the 19th chapter of 11 Kings are
alike. The longest verse is Esther 8:9; the
shortest verse is John 11:35. In Ezra 7:21 are
all the letters of the alphabet except the letter j.
The finest piece of reading is Acts 26th chapter.

The name of God is not found in Esther. The Bible
contains knowledge, wisdom, the mind of God, the state
of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, and
the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy; its
precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its
decisions are immutable. It contains light to guide you, food
to support you, and comfort to cheer you. God was 2,500 years
getting ready to write the Bible; 1,600 years writing it; and has
been 2000 years fulfilling it. The word “boy” occurs in the Bible three
times and the word “girl” two times. Christ is the key to the entire
book. Forty men were employed in its making. It was written by doctors,
farmers, fishers, kings, shepherds, old, young, rich, poor, learned, and
unlearned. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass,
and the soldier’s sword. Do not neglect your Bible. It is a mine of wealth
and health to the soul and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in this life
and will be opened to you at the judgment, and it is established forever. If you want
a crown of rejoicing when Jesus returns to raise the dead, read your Bible and lead

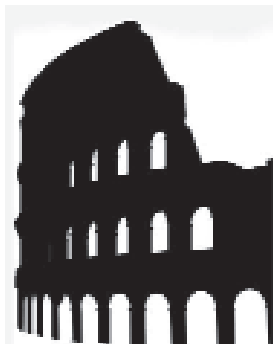
lost souls

To
CHRIST.



Romans 15:1-13

Jerry Bates



1. Each one of us is responsible for his own life; therefore, what another person may believe has nothing to do with me. True or False? (v. 1)
2. What is my duty to a fellow Christian? (v. 2)
3. Did Christ live His life to please Himself? (v. 3)
4. What is the function of the Old Testament Scriptures in our lives today? (v. 4)
5. What should be the purpose of our lives today? (v. 6)
6. What should Christians do to one another? (v. 7)
7. To whom did Jesus become a servant and why? (v. 8)
8. What was the hope that Gentiles would do to God? (v. 9)
9. Verse 9 contains a quotation of what Old Testament Scripture?
10. Verse 10 contains a quotation of what Old Testament Scripture?
11. What should everyone, including Gentiles, do towards the Lord? (v. 11)
12. Verse 12 contains a quotation of what Old Testament Scripture?
13. Who is the root of Jesse of whom Isaiah speaks? (v. 12)
14. Paul prays that his readers may be filled with _____ and _____. (v. 13)
15. God is a God of _____ and Paul prays that his readers may abound in _____ by the power of the Holy Spirit. (v. 13)

(see the back cover for answers)

1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. **2** Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. **3** For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on me.” **4** For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. **5** Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be likeminded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, **6** that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. **8** Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, **9** and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.” **10** And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people!” **11** And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him all you peoples!” **12** And again, Isaiah says: “There shall be a root of Jesse; and he who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.” **13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

NOTES: In this section Paul continues his discussion of the Christian’s responsibility to a fellow Christian. Our main duty towards another is to serve him for the purpose of building him up spiritually. In proof of that assertion, Paul uses Christ as an example. Christ did not come to earth to please Himself; rather, He came as a servant to man as well as to God. Thus, we should be willing to sacrifice our own personal desires for the good of another.

As Christians, we are to be united. We can be united only when we are willing to accept one another with his or her weaknesses. Christ accepted us with all our weaknesses, and so the strong should accept the weak who have weaknesses as well. The main purpose of this unity is that God may be glorified, and this can be accomplished only if we are united.

This section closes with a series of Old Testament quotations, with the word Gentiles common to them all. Christ came to earth and died on the cross so that both Jews and Gentiles could be united in one body and then, together, we can all glorify God. The result would thus be that everyone would experience all the spiritual benefits that come from trusting in Christ.

God's Faithful Children

Dale Grissom

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15). This verse from the Psalms causes our minds to reflect on the many Christians who have passed from this life. We know that, in spite of the great strides in the world of medicine, death comes to everyone. Just as surely as we are born we will die, unless, of course, the Lord comes again during our lifetime. The writer of the Hebrews letter tells us, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). The faithful children will then go home to be with God forever.

God, in the very beginning of creation, looked and saw that mankind would need a Savior. So, when the time was ready, according to His plan, God sent His only begotten Son from heaven to earth to be our Savior. Being sinless, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. His blood takes away all sins of those who obey the Gospel plan of salvation, and it continues to cleanse those who remain faithful. How grateful we should be for the wonderful privilege of being members of Christ's church, and for the promise of eternal life that has been given to the faithful. Read Revelation 2:10.

John, in Revelation 21:4, describes the peace that the faithful will enjoy in heaven: *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."* Heaven is so wonderful that, once we get there, we will never want to return to this old world of sorrow and sin. We will be filled with peace and joy forever. What a wonderful future is promised to God's faithful children! †

Editor's Note: Dale Grissom (1927 – 2014) was a longtime staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*. He was a devoted servant of God, having served as an elder and having been fervent in personally teaching the lost and encouraging other Christians to do the same. For many years he was a vital part of the Lord's church in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

Heaven is so wonderful that, once we get there, we will never want to return to this old world of sorrow and sin.

SALVATION

Casual Seekers at the Narrow Gate

Cecil May Jr.



We should shift our attention, we are told, from the epistles to the books of the Gospel, and thus to Jesus. One interesting effect of paying greater attention to Jesus in the Gospel accounts is a stronger emphasis on the necessity of obedience and commitment for those who would be in the kingdom.

Jesus often calls people to discipleship, or is asked what one must do to be His disciple. He never tells anyone, “Just invite Me into your heart,” or “Say the sinner’s prayer.” Jesus’ call is always for action, for immediate and continued obedience, for total consecration.

When asked, “*Lord, are there few who are saved?*” Christ responded, “*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able*” (Luke 13:24). Jesus here contrasts “strive,” “labor fervently,” or “agonize” with “seek,” “desire.”

SALVATION

Seek is not always an inadequate word. In some sayings, to seek Jesus or salvation is called for. Even then, however, context or a modifier may suggest more than casually looking around. “*Seek first*” (Matthew 6:33). “*Seek diligently*” (Luke 15:8). The contrast of strive and seek in Luke 13 suggests casual seeking will not do. One must labor earnestly to enter.

We do not find ourself on the road to heaven by accident. The best translation of Isaiah 35:8 says, “*A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called a Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it; the fool shall not wander in; no lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it... but the redeemed shall walk there.*” The wandering fool, like the unclean and the devouring lion, will not be on that holy highway.

The gate to the road that leads to life is narrow (Matthew 7:13,14). We must squeeze through with effort, and on purpose. Those blessed to enter the kingdom are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). One who does not love Jesus more than father, mother, children, or even his or her own life cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:26). God’s Word is to be desired as a newborn baby thirsts for its mother’s milk (1 Peter 2:3).

Those who love the truth and earnestly seek it will be aided by God’s providence to find it, but we are warned that He will send strong delusions to those who do not love the truth, to those who seek their pleasure in evil (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). God helps us find what we diligently desire.

No one can earn salvation; it is a free gift of grace (Romans 6:23), received by faith (Ephesians 2:4-5). But a purpose of Paul’s preaching is to evoke “*the obedience of faith*” (Romans 1:5; 16:26). Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). “*Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?*” (Luke 6:46). “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*” (John 14:15).

King Asa called the people of Judah to enter a covenant “*to seek the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul.*” And they sought Him with their whole desire, and He was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest (2 Chronicles 15:12-15).

So, today, rest in Him will found by those who seek Him with their whole heart. †

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SALVATION TIME

Frank Chesser

From out of the bosom of eternity came time. God *“inhabiteh eternity”* (Isaiah 57:15), while man dwells in time. Eternity gave birth to time as a temporary arrangement for transient humanity.

“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8) is Peter’s way of saying that time means nothing to God. God was not younger when time began, nor will He be older when time ends.

“In the beginning” marks the commencement of time, the universe and man (Genesis 1:1). At time’s inception, there was no backward look, for prior to time is eternity. Everything material is limited by time, as is time itself, for time’s final sunset was predestined in eternity.

Time is not eternity’s interlude, for eternity is without beginning or end. If time’s duration is a billion years, it will only be a microscopic pebble on the unending shores of eternity. When eternity bids goodbye to time, time will not be missed. There will be no void to fill.

Man’s body is birthed for time, his spirit for eternity. The moment he enters the door marked “Life,” he commences a hasty exit toward the door marked, “Death”. His days on earth pass with more swiftness than a *“weaver’s shuttle”* (Job 7:6), a fleeing *“shadow”* (Job 14:2), or a dissipating *“vapor”* (James 4:14). Time marks him at birth and claims him at death.

Time rushes on, unchecked and unaltered, carrying every material object to its inevitable end. Rust, decay, and death are its perpetual companions. We are all running out of time. The only thing that really matters is, are you prepared to meet God? Are you ready to go? When time is swallowed up in eternity, where will you be? *“Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2). †

Frank Chesser is a writer and preacher working with the Panama Street congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

We are all running out of time. The only thing that really matters is, are you prepared to meet God?

SALVATION

Blessed Insurance

Patrick Morrison

I have been surrounded by Christians my whole life. From the time I entered into this world my life has revolved around church-related activities — fellowship, worship, singing, etc. Praising God in song has always been one of the fondest memories of my childhood, as well as one of my favorite things to do even now. As a little fellow, sometimes I didn't know or understand the meaning or the import of the words of the songs that we would often sing. One of those great old hymns that I misheard was the song "*Blessed Assurance*." I always thought we were singing the words "blessed *insurance*." Even though I may not have fully understood the words, I am not so sure that I was really all that far off in what I was singing.

Think about it: We buy insurance in order to put our minds at ease. We have life insurance, health insurance, automobile insurance, disability insurance, homeowner's insurance, and on and on the list could go. There is probably insurance for our insurance! Why do we spend so much money insuring our lives and our possessions? It's because we want reassurance. God has given



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us spiritual insurance (assurance) through the offering of Jesus Christ for our sins. His promises are sure (2 Peter 3:9). *“And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end”* (Hebrews 6:11). *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever”* (Isaiah 32:17). Because of God’s faithfulness to keep His promises, we can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22).

When was the last time you did an insurance check-up? Every once in a while it is good to take inventory of our lives and take note of any changes in order to make sure that we have proper coverages in our policies. So, too, must we double-check to make sure that we have the right spiritual insurance (2 Corinthians 13:5). How is your spiritual insurance?

When you choose to stand with God, you have the assurance that He is on your side. Though all the world may forsake us, Jesus will stand with us.

When you give your life over to God, you can rest assured that you’re in good hands. Jesus reminds us of the value of placing our souls in the hands of God: *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand”* (John 10:28,29).

When you choose to stand with God, you have the assurance that He is on your side. Though all the world may forsake us, Jesus will stand with us (2 Timothy 4:16,17). *“If God be for us, who can be against us”* (Romans 8:31)?

When you pledge your life of service to the Lord, you have the promise that, like a good neighbor (and even more than a good neighbor), God will be there. He lives within us (2 Corinthians 6:16) and works within us (Philippians 2:13). We cannot escape the presence of God (Psalm 139:7-10).

When you commit yourself to following Jesus, you will receive your peace from the Rock. He is the Rock of Ages (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is the cornerstone of our faith (Ephesians 2:20). He is the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Can you honestly say that you have these assurances? If not, perhaps your spiritual insurance is lacking in proper coverage, or maybe you have allowed your policy to lapse. Why not make certain of your soul’s salvation today? You can have this “blessed insurance” through Jesus Christ! †

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue church in Jasper, Alabama, USA.

SALVATION

Lost Things

Bob Plunket

We are forever losing our portable phone. Of course, I'm told, it's right where you left it. I'm not so sure about that. Our phone has legs and fingers. I know, I found it the other day with the chocolate finger prints on it in the toy box. When I mashed the beeper it seemed to say, "Get me out of here." Isn't it great that you can press a button and the phone will beep?

Wouldn't it be great to have a beeper for your keys and glasses and socks and all the things we lose? There is a monitor available now for parents with little children who play in the yard. For those who lose their car in the parking lot there is a button you can press that will sound your horn.

Why do we lose so many things? Well, it's because we do not put them back where they belong. We use them and drop them and move on to something else, and sadly, we do not even miss them until we need them again. By that time they have been covered with an afghan or couch pillows. It is mostly carelessness.

Could this be a clue as to why we lose our children? It is not wickedness, but carelessness and thoughtlessness. We can become preoccupied with other things and not realize they are missing until a lot of other things have been piled on them, and by that time, their batteries may have gone dead. Perhaps there were beepers going off in them, but we didn't hear.

Sadly, there are some in the church and perhaps in the family who want to get lost. They have purposely wandered out of the range of the beeper. We do pray that they will come home again.

Remember that the beeper only tells you where the phone is. It does not tell you why it is there. It does not restore the dead battery, nor does it keep it from happening again. We must learn from this.

Our Lord, who came to seek and save the lost, said of Nathaniel, "*I saw you under the fig tree*" (John 1:48). Christ needs no beeper. He knows where you are.✠

Bob Plunket preaches for the Colbert Heights congregation in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA.

Sadly, there are some in the church and perhaps in the family who want to get lost. They have purposely wandered away.

What Does the Bible Teach?

Sunny David

The Bible teaches that Christians are a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9). They are a peculiar people because they do not follow the standard set by the world, but are trying to live by following the steps of Christ, as they are taught (1 Peter 2:21). Christ said that His followers are *in* the world but are not *of* the world, as He was not of the world when He was on earth (John 17:14-16). The apostle Paul wrote that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Sure, on earth we are citizens of the country we live in, and as Christians we are a responsible people in our nation. Our first responsibility, however, is to God, as Christ taught in Matthew 6:33. We must, therefore, try to live daily our lives on earth in such manner that through all our actions God's name may be glorified (Matthew 5:16).

As Christians we are also responsible to our fellow beings. Christ taught, *"Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them"* (Matthew 7:12). We want others to speak well of us and to do good for us, and so we should do likewise towards others. We don't want others to cheat us, or to lie to us, or to harm us in any way, and so we must first do the same to others.

As Christians we owe a debt to our nation. We enjoy freedom and protection from evil and lawless men. Only a settled government can provide these things. In addition, there is a wide range of public services all of us enjoy each day, and there is no way that each individual could provide for himself services such as water, electricity, sewage, etc. This places us under obligatory debt. As responsible citizens we know that to fail in good citizenship is to fail the Lord to whom we belong. We must, therefore, adhere to civil obedience. There may be things we do not like, or we might think those things should be handled or done differently than they are presently being done. But instead of grumbling, we should be thankful for those things we have and enjoy each day.

Of course, if there is a law that violates the will of God, the Christian should resist and have no part in it (Acts 5:29), but the child of God will never take thought of vengeance or revenge. The Bible teaches, *"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,'"*

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says the Lord. 'Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'" (Romans 12:17-21).

As Christians we believe the government is divinely ordained of God. This means we are to discharge our duty as law-abiding citizens, even if evil men are serving in high places. We believe that God is supreme and nothing is hidden from His eyes. As obedient children of God, we try to live peaceably with all men, taking no thought of vengeance or revenge. We trust in God, and even if a tyrant is on the throne, we must follow what God has taught us in His Bible.

Romans 13:1-7 says, *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same for he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, and avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.*

"Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." Again, we read, "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:13-17).

God-fearing and law-abiding Christians, therefore, will never join those who are involved in civil disobedience. We may disagree when a law is contrary to the law of God and is against the people in general. In such a case we can work to change that law so that it conforms to the divine law and for the betterment of all people, especially when we have the opportunity to exercise our constitutional right to vote, but we must never seek to bring such a change by becoming law-breakers. †

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a radio and TV evangelist in India.

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Spiritual Leaders — Essential Characteristics

Ronald D. Bryant

SENSITIVITY — Spiritual sensitivity is essential to spiritual leadership. Yes, the church is people, but they are God's people. Yes, the fellowship of the church looks like a social gathering, but it is far more. It is a gathering of eternal souls who have entered into a covenant relationship with Christ. They are people involved in a spiritual struggle, seeking to make spiritual progress. The spiritual is central to their relationship with God. The various works of a local congregation must be regarded from a spiritual perspective. Spiritual leaders realize that in their role they are involved with eternal souls, helping them to cleave to the Lord, to serve Him faithfully, and to prepare for eternity.

Spiritual leaders are sensitive to the fact that they are to lead, not drive. They talk to the congregation in a manner that serves to honor God and strengthen the body. Instead of working to control people and events, they endeavor to mold the hearts and lives.

Spiritual leaders are sensitive to the spiritual struggles their brethren are facing. Spiritual health and progress is their constant objective. They know that people need help to avoid being consumed with petty issues, personal agendas, and personal grievances. Spiritual leaders focus upon God-honoring plans, purposes, and endeavors. They keep these before the flock. They see this as essential to the cultivation of spiritual devotion and discipline. Spiritual leaders are sensitive to the fact that they are to lead, not drive. They talk to the congregation in a manner that serves to honor God and strengthen the body. Instead of working to control people and events, they endeavor to mold the hearts and lives.

When leaders are compelled by the spiritual, they openly, earnestly, and consistently communicate spiritual values. They think and work in terms of the spiritual and the eternal, and they compassionately lead others to the same.

The genuine compassion of godly leaders is everywhere and in everything evident. Their compassion strengthens and encourages others. They delight in serving, in equipping, in encouraging, and in allowing their brethren to serve and to achieve. They know that they are ministering to and watching over eternal souls.

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SINCERITY — Spiritual integrity demands sincerity. Honesty and openness, candor, and courage, love and care — these are fundamental to true spirituality.

Spiritual leaders know the importance of saying what they mean, and meaning what they say. They know the necessity of

Spiritual leaders know the importance of saying what they mean, and meaning what they say.

communicating with candor and kindness. They understand the importance of avoiding giving mixed messages — and they know the danger of possessing or presenting an admixture of motives. Because they love and follow Christ, they are committed to speaking the truth in love. Being committed to speaking the truth in love, they do not need to rehearse or stage what they are going to say. They know that love always follows a consistent and pure path. They know that truth always deals faithfully with reality. They know that love and truth combined stand together to illustrate sincerity and purity. They also stand together to eliminate even the appearance of deceit or manipulation. Godly leaders exalt love and truth in their daily lives, in all their actions, and in all their relationships.

SIMPLICITY — Spiritual leaders speak and serve quietly and simply with a solemn, yet joyful, sense of duty. Conscious of the great beauty of truth and righteousness, they desire these be clearly manifested in them, and that these flow from them into the hearts of those who look to them for guidance. Just as the master jeweler will not use a setting that detracts from the beauty and value of the diamond, spiritual leaders will not clutter the truth of God with things that detract from it. They that serve Christ speak words of simple and sincere encouragement, and they seek to avoid using empty words of flattery. They do not serve to be seen by men or to please men. They do not seek power over men, nor do they seek

Spiritual leaders speak and serve quietly and simply with a solemn, yet joyful sense of duty.

glory from men. They see their work as important, but they do not see themselves as important. They know the danger of selfishness and the danger of being self-willed. They do

not seek to have their own way. With hearts ruled by love for God, they seek to exalt Christ. They are content to simply be His servants.

Are you, as a spiritual leader in the church of Christ, governed by these attributes? 

Ronald D. Bryant preaches for the Central Church of Christ in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.

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The Church that Jesus Built

Charles E. Burch

The church that Jesus built was a subject of prophecy. The prophet Isaiah stated, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go up and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:2,3). From this prophecy we can learn several things.

First, it was to be in *“the last days”*. The apostle Peter said the events of Acts 2, when the church was established, were in the last days. Second, Isaiah was speaking of the Lord’s house. From 1 Timothy 3:15 we find that the Lord’s house was the church. Third, it was to begin in Jerusalem. In Acts 2 we find that the church had its beginning in Jerusalem. Therefore, we can say that Isaiah was foretelling the coming of the Lord’s church.

Before our Lord was crucified, He made a promise. After Peter had confessed Him to be *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16), Jesus said, *“... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). Our Lord here promised to build His church. Notice what He said, *“I will build my church.”* When He said *“My”* we know it was to belong to Him. The apostle Paul told the Ephesians elders that Jesus purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Therefore, we know that the Lord’s church belongs to Him, not to man. Again notice, Jesus said, *“I will build My church.”* He did not say, *“I will build My churches.”* He used the singular form, which stands for one! Jesus never intended for there to be more than one religion upon the earth! This is why He could pray for unity among all believers. *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”* (John 17:21).

After Christ came forth from the grave He said, *“All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth”* (Matthew 28:18 ASV). Therefore, if Christ had received all authority, NO ONE ELSE has any authority to start a religion different from the Lord’s church.

The multitude of different religions today conflict with the plan God had for all to be united. Jesus will deliver up His church to the Father at the end of time. *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power”* (1 Corinthians 15:24). Will you be in the delivered-up church? †

Charles E. Burch is a retired preacher of the Gospel living in St. Elmo, Alabama, USA.

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LOOSE CANNONS

Bill Dillon

Victor Hugo's tremendous novel *Ninety-Three* is centered in the French Revolution, and Hugo's value as a novelist is seen, in a measure, as he describes the most frightening event that could ever happen on an old wooden sailing vessel. A formidable twenty-four pounder cannon broke its moorings and became like a savage uncontrollable beast in the belly of the ship. Hugo writes: "Nothing more terrible can happen to a vessel in open sea and under full sail." He tells how the ten thousand pound bronze beast went on a monstrous rampage, dashing and destroying the inside workings of the ship. "The horrible cannon flings itself about, advances, recoils, strikes to the right, strikes to the left, flees, passes, disconcerts, ambushes, breaks down obstacles, crushes men like flies."

The point is, there are many "loose cannons" in the ship of faith we call the church! Brethren who become loosened from their faith and, failing to manifest love, joy, and peace, they become rampaging ruinous instruments to the harmony and unity of the Holy Spirit.

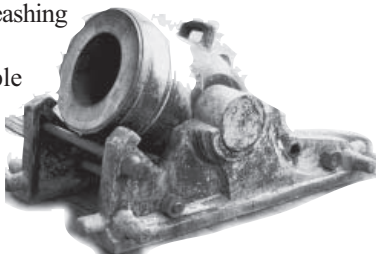
"Loose cannons" in the church "let fly" in their public criticisms of beloved elders, sincere deacons, committed preachers, and fellow brethren without caring what harm their verbal volleys may do.

Brethren, let us not be "loose cannons" in the church, but, *"let our speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt"* (Colossians 4:6). Instead of attacking one another at every squeak and unusual sound, let us give the benefit of the doubt *"and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3).

How terrible for a ship at sea to go through the nightmare of a loose cannon destroying all things in its unreasoning path, but how much greater harm for the church to have "loose cannons" of dissatisfied brethren unleashing their verbal cannonballs at innocent victims.

An appealing picture of God's people in their relationship to each other is given in Isaiah 41:6, *"They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good courage.'"*

Are you a "loose cannon" in the church? ☩



Bill Dillon is a Gospel preacher living in Cotter, Arkansas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

And **the Angel of the Lord** appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush... "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God (Exodus 3:2-6).

Behold, I send **an Angel** before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for **My name is in Him**. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For **My Angel** will go before you...(Exodus 23:20-23)

And **the Angel of God**, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them(Exodus 14:19).

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of **the Lord**... For He said, "Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie." So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and **the Angel of His Presence** saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved **His Holy Spirit**... (Isaiah 63:7,9,10).

"...our fathers were under the cloud... they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that **Rock was Christ**" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Who Is "The Angel of the Lord"?

Fifty-two times in the Old Testament, a Being is identified as "**the Angel of the Lord**". Reading the context, this One speaks with the authority of God ("I know..."; "I will multiply..."; "My name is Wonderful..."; "I am the God of your father — the God of Abraham...") Isaiah 63 mentions "**the Lord**", "**the Angel of His Presence**", and "**His Holy Spirit**" — the Godhead and the work of the Persons of the Godhead *in the Old Testament!*

The Angel of the Lord led Israel during the wilderness wanderings. He is identified in 1 Corinthians 10 as "**Christ**".

What True Christianity is NOT About

Robert Brooks

Christianity is the religion of those who follow Jesus Christ. Christianity in the world is the result of the life, death, resurrection, and teachings of Jesus.

I regret to admit that some who profess to follow Christ do not actually abide by His teachings or His examples. Rather, they say and do some things which actually oppose Christ. It would be much better if professors of Christ would live so as to glorify Him.

I fear that many people do not understand the difference in true Christianity and the counterfeit. Whenever someone makes the headlines by actions which are contrary to the teachings of Christ, the unlearned may think this is the way all Christians believe or act.

I'm writing to defend the truth by stating what Christianity is NOT about. This is an answer to those men or women who make merchandise of the Gospel of Christ and who play politics and who try to pit one race against another for personal advantage.

Christianity does not have one thing to do with one form of government over another. It is not about politics or power struggles. It is not about one-up-man-ship to gain control. We

may fight and war among ourselves, but the teachings of Christ instruct us to be meek and humble. We are taught to "*in honor preferring one another*" (Romans 12:10).

True Christianity does not prefer democracy over monarchy. Christianity will survive and even thrive in a Communist country, if it is allowed to exist at all. Christianity actually began when the world was ruled by the Caesars.

Christianity has nothing to do with whether its adherents are slaves or free men. Jesus did not abolish slavery per se, but taught masters to treat their slaves well and taught the slaves to do right by their masters (Colossians, chapters 3 and 4).

Christianity does not care whether one is rich or poor. While wealth is not condemned if it is gained by honest means, one can be a Christian even though dirt poor or filthy rich. James wrote to both the rich and the poor in James, chapter 2.

True Christianity is not about racism. One race is not exalted over another in the Gospel. In fact, "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but we are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28).

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Christianity is not about eloquence of speech or fanfare. It is not about being able to outtalk the other fellow. The religion begun by Christ and recorded in the New Testament is about “walking the walk”, not about “talking the talk”.

Christianity is not about shallow emotionalism or mere pretense. It is not about merely singing and shouting on Sunday, but about also lending your

brother a helping hand on Monday (Luke 10:30-37).

If we know and appreciate what Christianity is NOT about, perhaps we can better understand what it IS about. Hopefully we will not be influenced by the mere pretenders, but by the true followers of Christ. †

Robert Brooks serves the Lord in Hogansville, Georgia, USA.

An Acceptable Time

Mark McWhorter

In Isaiah 49:8, we read, *“Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.”*

God gave Christ as a covenant to the people of earth. It is through Christ that we can have hope of salvation. It is through Christ that we have hope of living in heaven for eternity. It is by accepting the terms of the covenant given by Christ in the New Testament that we enter into the covenant. It is by obeying the terms of the covenant that we gain the promises of the covenant.

In 2 Corinthians 6:2, we read, *“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”* Every day should be lived as the day of salvation. This means that we must live according to the terms of the covenant every day. We should not put off accepting the covenant, nor should we delay obeying its terms.

Today is an acceptable time. Are you obeying God? Have you been studying your Bible? If not, then you should begin right now doing so. †

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

How Can We Tell What Is Right?

Albert Gardner

We measure with a yardstick when we build a house. We weigh it when we buy meat. We use true figures to balance out a bank account.

But how do we arrive at truth in religion? Can we vote on it? Can we go by feelings? Is it right if everyone does it? If the majority believes and practices a thing, does that make it right? These are not the ways we determine what is right in other things, so why should we do it this way in religion? Our soul is worth more than the whole world, and we must arrive at what is right by a true standard.

THE WRITTEN WORD IS THE LAST WORD

Heaven is so interested in our salvation that God revealed salvation in Christ and had it written down by the Holy Spirit. It is a most serious matter when men add to or take from the written Word of God. The Bible is a different kind of book because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Jews had this solemn warning: *“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you”* (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Paul gave the key to living in 1 Corinthians 4:6. *“That ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written.”* Serious warning about adding to and taking from the Word is given at the close of the Bible in Revelation 22:18,19.

HOW THIS APPLIES TO US

1. WHEN DO WE EAT THE LORD’S SUPPER? The question is not, “When do the majority do it?” It is not, “When do I feel like doing it?” Since we are going to let the Bible be the final standard, what does it teach us to do? *“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). The only teaching we have about eating the Lord’s Supper is for eating it on the first day of the week. Secular church history tells us the church ate this Supper the first day of every week.

2. WHO, WHY, AND HOW ARE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS RELATED TO BAPTISM. Again, we do not seek the answers of the majority, but the an-

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

swers from the inspired word of God.

WHO? Those old enough to hear, understand, believe, repent, and confess Christ, are proper subjects of baptism. In other words, those who are guilty of sin (Acts 8:30; Mark 16:16; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:10).

WHY? In order to be saved, to have the remission of sins, to wash away sins (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16).

HOW? Come to the water, go down into the water, be buried in water, be raised, and come up out of the water (Acts 8:35-39; Romans 6:3-5).

3. WHAT IS THE TRUE STANDARD OF WORSHIP? People can worship and be ignorant of true worship. The many idols at Athens were evidence that the people were highly religious. *“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with the inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you”* (Acts 17:23).

Jesus did not come to make people religious, for they were already religious. He did not come to get people to worship, but to set them right in their worship. He told the woman at the well about true worship. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). From that time acceptable worship must have these three qualities: It must be directed to God, in the right

spirit, and according to truth.

It is obvious that lacking either of these can make worship vain, empty, of no account (Matthew 15:9). Like the yardstick, we are not permitted to change it, but by this standard we are to test our worship.

What about idols? Wrong object. Must be only to God. Can I worship in the wrong spirit? People often fail to worship in a spirit of submission, humility, and reverence, and in doing so, they fail in true worship.

With the approval of God, can I add drums, handclapping, and instrumental music? It must be according to truth, so where does the New Testament teach it and authorize it?

As I see it, the problem is not in understanding this principle of letting the Bible be our guide, but the great problem is that people will say, “I know that is what the Bible says, but I don’t think we have to do it in this enlightened age.” It is not a matter of understanding, but a matter of faith! ☩

Albert Gardner (1928-2012) was a preacher of the Gospel living in Kennett, Missouri, USA.

But how do we arrive at truth in religion? Can we vote on it? Can we go by feelings? Is it right if everyone does it?

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The Need to Understand

Hollis Miller

It is a matter of great importance for Christians to understand that the nucleus of Christian faith is not how happy one is ‘down at church’ or how much better life is now that the whole family is attending Sunday School. All of these matters are by-products of being a Christian. They are not the heart and soul of the faith.

The nucleus of Christian faith is Jesus Christ. When He is kept at the center, one is joyful, whether in prison or living in tranquility. Making the earthly joys of being a Christian the focal point of faith is like filling one’s cup with the aroma of perking coffee, rather than the coffee itself.

One has little difficulty imagining how startled the apostle Paul would have been had a Christian told him that his faith was producing boredom rather than joy. The apostle would surely have asked, “Were your sins not forgiven? Do you not have hope of heaven? Do you not have the privilege of prayer? Do you not worship God? Are your fellow Christians not your brethren? How is it possible that your faith is producing boredom rather than joy?”

Christianity and ‘churchanity’ are not synonyms. The latter is composed of matters which draw religious men to a common cause. The former is submission to the crucified Son of God. Christianity thrives through both sunshine and rain; ‘churchanity’ thrives in sunshine, but falters when it rains. The need to understand is one of the utmost importance. †

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

A Call for Change

Chad Ezelle

“He must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). You already know Jesus made an extreme sacrifice for you, and as many times as we have been asked this question, it needs to be kept in the front of our minds: What changes have you made in your life because of His sacrifice? Is your commitment to Jesus shown only by a one-time decision and weekly church attendance? Or, does the sacrifice of Jesus Christ mean more to you than that? I hope it does! If you honestly examine yourself, does it look like you are a one or two day per week Christian? If so, it is time for a change. Nothing should take precedence over it. Today, how can you make sure that your Christianity impacts all of your days – not just a couple of them? †

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

“The Whole Counsel of God”

Steve Vice

In Acts 20:27 Paul said, “*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*” Paul wanted people to have a complete and thorough understanding of the will of God. Two reasons that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles were: 1) to bring to their remembrance **all** things that He had said to them (John 14:26); and, 2) to guide them into **all** truth (John 16:13).

In the courts of our land the oath is often repeated, “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” It is also recognized by honorable people that a half truth is the same as a lie. Therefore, it is evident that in order for justice to be fulfilled the whole truth must be told.

It is common today for religious people to say, “All you need to do is to receive Jesus into your heart and you will be saved.” This sounds good, but the Bible does not teach it. John 1:12 does speak about receiving Jesus. But it does not say that the person who receives Jesus will be saved. It says that the person who receives Jesus has “*the right to become children of God...*” (future tense).

It has been said that all a person needs to know about salvation is found in Romans 10:9,10. Is Romans 10:9,10 the whole counsel of God concerning salvation? No. In Romans 2:4 the inspired writer speaks of repentance. We know that without repentance there is no salvation (Luke 13:3). But Romans 10 says nothing about repentance. Therefore, Romans 10:9,10 is not the *whole* counsel of God on the subject of salvation.

Others look to Ephesians 2:8,9 as the final and only authority concerning salvation. But this leaves out the fact that the Christians at Ephesus confessed (Acts 19:19). In addition, we must not overlook the fact that the Christians at Ephesus were also baptized (Acts 19:5; Ephesians 4:5). If a person wants to learn the whole counsel of God on these matters, he or she ought to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11).

Most of us can quote the golden text of the Bible — John 3:16. But when you quote it, do you insert the word “*shall*” instead of “*should*” in this verse? If a person inserts the word “*shall*” then it makes Jesus a liar, because in this same book in 8:31-52 and 12:42 there were people who believed in Jesus, but they were not saved. The verse truly says, “*...should not perish.*” In other words, the possibility of perishing still remains. Does John 3:16 tell all that a person needs

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to know about salvation? Anyone who teaches so has surely failed to teach the whole counsel of God on this subject.

Jesus Himself said that a person must believe in Him (John 8:24). Confession is also necessary for salvation (Matthew 10:32,33). Jesus plainly said that unless you repent you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3). It was also Jesus who said, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”* (Mark 16:16). Shall we neglect the counsel of Jesus Christ the Savior in this matter? *“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him”* (Luke 7:30). It is a serious matter to reject or neglect the whole counsel of God on any subject, and salvation is the most important subject of all. †

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

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES

Ernest S. Underwood

Joshua called upon the people to *“Choose you this day...”* There are some good biblical examples of men and women who were faced with choices who made the right one.

Moses *“came to years”* in Egypt. The Hebrews writer tells us that Moses chose to forsake all that Egypt was to him, and chose to serve with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Joshua, in his farewell address, and after calling on the people to make their choices, stated, *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

David had a choice to make. He, like Moses and Joshua, made the right one. In Psalm 119:30 he said, *“I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me.”*

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, made the right choice, and Jesus stated that this would not be taken away from her. In Luke 10:38-42, we read, *“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. When Martha complained, Jesus said to her; ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’”*

What choices are you making? Will they get you to heaven?



My “Enemy”

Betty Burton Choate

How often is it true for all of us:

“**I** am my own worst enemy.”?

No outside force can hurt me

As I hurt **myself**...

I am the one

Allowing the attitudes

That close the longed-for doors;

It is **my** pessimism

That darkens my sunny days;

I waste the hours of my life

Procrastinating,

Intending to do

But never buckling down;

It is **my** smallness

That limits vision,

My jealousies stunting friendships,

My mouth that causes trouble,

My lack of perception

That never sees me as **I** am,

My good intentions

That this “enemy” neglects.

I am what I am.

I cannot be bigger than myself.

I cannot be what I am not.

Yes, as Pogo said,

“We have met the enemy,

And **he** is **us**.”

I am my own worst enemy.

I must take myself with me

Wherever I may go

And be with others only what I am...

The lesson I must learn:

If I want **my world** to be improved,

I must improve **myself**.

THE SHINING

Colin McKee

In 1980 a horror film called “The Shining” was produced and offered to audiences across the world. It had to do with ghosts or spirits who were disturbing mortals that were occupying a hotel. “The Shining” was the supposed manifestation of occult power in the film and of course all of it was the fanciful invention of writers and producers.

But a real true shining is described in God’s Word. God promised to shine on man and in turn demanded a shining from man. In Isaiah God issued His promise for that shining and called on His people to shine His light to others.

The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” says the Lord. “As for me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendant’s descendants,” says the Lord, “from this time and forevermore.” “Arise , shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 59:20-60:3)

God, the Redeemer, promised to come and make a covenant with those who turned from transgressions. That coming was the light of His salvation and He promised to “arise” over those who received it (60:2). This is parallel to Paul’s writing in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” In short, that was the light of the Gospel.

Since God gave the light, He then called upon the recipients to get up and shine (60:1). Who are the “shiners” that are “shining”?

- Those who are spiritually wise. “*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament*” (Daniel 12:3a).
- Those who turn others to righteousness. “*And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever*” (Daniel 12:3b).

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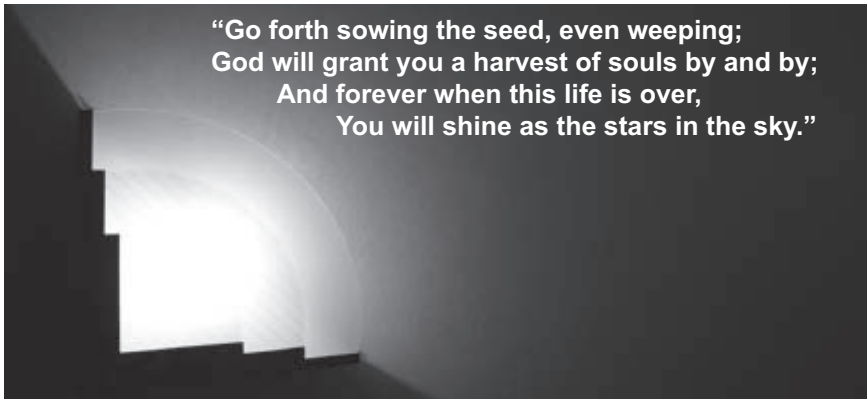
- Those who are turned to righteousness. *“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Matthew 13:43).
- Those who live justly. *“But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day”* (Proverbs 4:18).
- Those who do the good works of God. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).
- Those who live the serene life. *“...you will be God’s children without fault. But you are living with crooked and mean people all around you, among whom you shine like stars in the dark world. You offer the teaching that gives life”* (Philippians 2:15,16 New Century Version).

“Therefore He says, *“Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light”* (Ephesians 5:14). He gives us light (His shining) that we may give to others *“the light of His glory”*. We should take to heart the words of the Psalmist, *“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him”* (Psalm 126:5,6).

My brother, Bob McKee, wrote a song titled ***“You Will Shine As The Stars”*** that has the theme of going to shine the light of the Gospel to others. The chorus of that song is:

“His people shine as bright stars when they go forth, taking His Gospel to others and accompany it up with a life that shines in godly living.” †

Colin McKee works in behalf of the Lord’s church in Indonesia.



**“Go forth sowing the seed, even weeping;
God will grant you a harvest of souls by and by;
And forever when this life is over,
You will shine as the stars in the sky.”**

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

How Jesus Saw People

Neal Pollard

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:35-38).

In these few verses the Holy Spirit, through Matthew, paints a beautiful picture. He presents how Jesus saw the people He encountered as His public ministry gains momentum. How Jesus saw people gives us an example of how we should see them, too.

He saw them as *hurting* (Matthew 9:35). Their hurts were literal, from sickness to disease. Those hurts mattered to Jesus, and He took action. He helped the hurting. We need to approach people the same way, sensitive to the hurts they harbor. The hurts may be physical, but often they are social and emotional. We cannot, as Christians, be callous and unfeeling to their hurts. Instead, we must treat them as we would wish others to treat us (Matthew 7:12).

He saw them as *hopeless* (Matthew 9:36). He did not see them as a lost cause, but rather as people in search of a hope that eluded them. They were weary, scattered, and "shepherdless". Yet, this condition drew Jesus' concern. He wanted to give them guidance and assistance. He still wants that for the multitudes today, but He works through us. We need to understand the hopelessness and the lack of direction of the multitudes. It should draw our concern.

He saw them as *a harvest* (Matthew 9:37,38). They were not just a number, but they provided plentiful opportunity. Jesus wanted His disciples dispatched to minister to that multitude. His concern has not abated today. He wants us in the harvest fields, reaching the hopeless and hurting.

Yesterday, during our missions meeting, there was a most unusual "benevolence call". Let me just say "his" name was Mary. As I left the meeting to meet him at the door, my first reaction was repulsion. Then, I felt pity. What causes a young man to become so confused or hurt to act out in such a way? What hope did he have? What opportunity did I have to reach him? Who knows how his story will end, but my hope and prayer is that something was done or said that will lead him to Christ at some point. You will not likely meet someone so apparently in need of Jesus today, but most of those people you will encounter are lost. That means they are in need. Let us see people like Jesus did! ☩

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church of the Lord in Denver, Colorado, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Do We Dare to Answer Christ's Question?

Ardron Hinton

"And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others?" (Matthew 5:47) There is the question: **"What do you do more than others?"** In its context, the question concerns going beyond loving those who love us and beyond helping those who help us. However, the question has all sorts of possible applications. Most people are content to be typical — no better and no worse than the majority around them. However, Christ calls His followers to *excellence*, not *mediocrity*.

Back to that question, what answer could we give to it right now? What is our record in such matters as worshiping and serving God? What about efforts to learn and understand the teachings of God? What about faithfulness and dependability as children of God? What about putting into practice the challenging and difficult sacrificial lifestyle of Christianity? In all these matters, are we striving for excellence, or are we content just to reach the prevailing level in our world?

If you are determined to measure yourself spiritually by standing beside others, try reaching out a little farther for the person by whom you stand. Millions live in nations where anyone professing faith in Christ faces serious possibilities, ranging from political repression to violent persecution. (Read the article in **Reader's Digest** for August '97, *The Global War on Christians*, pp. 50-55 — and with the passing years the war has only intensified.) We have grown comfortable and complacent in this nation. We need to reread the familiar parable in Luke 10:30-37 and determine to be more like the Samaritan and less like those who *"passed by on the other side"*.

In the battleground for righteousness, for truth, and for the kingdom of God, we not only need to stand up and be counted, we need to stand **tall**. In the same sermon in which Jesus asked the question, we have noticed, He warned, *"Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:20). These were religious people, but **we must go beyond their level.** †

Ardron Hinton preaches the Gospel in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

The Only People

Going to Heaven?

Cory Collins

Sometimes, when one says, “I belong to the churches of Christ”, another person will react: “So, you’re the folks who think you’re the only ones going to heaven, right?” What’s the best way to respond to this comment? Here are several suggestions.

Response One:

“I’m glad you asked! How would you answer that question? Who do you think will be in heaven?”

After the other person answers ...

“Tell me why you answered that way. How did you come to that conclusion? Would you like to see what the Bible says about it?”

Response Two:

“I’m glad you asked! Well, one thing is for sure. God knows exactly who will be in heaven, wouldn’t you agree? The Bible says, *“The Lord knows those*

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who are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). It really does not matter in the long run what you or I say about it. The fact is, most religious people believe that the way they are following is the best. Otherwise they would change. So doesn’t it seem right and safe to say, “It’s the Lord who knows who’s going to heaven?”

Assuming that the other person agrees ...

“Since God is the one who knows, how would we learn from Him? Do you believe that the Bible is God’s Word, and that only the Bible tells us how to follow Jesus and get to heaven? There’s not any other sure way to know, is there? We cannot take anyone else’s word on it, whether a preacher, priest, specific religious group, or anyone else, can we? Would you agree?”

Assuming that the other person agrees ...

“If the Bible were to contradict clearly some religious belief, tradition, or practice, wouldn’t the Bible be right? Obviously these differing religious groups cannot all be right. Does it make sense to you that we should follow the Bible and give up any teachings or ideas that the Bible does not teach?”

Assuming that the other person agrees ...

“Would you like to study the Bible with me and compare it with your thoughts and beliefs? You can ask anything you like, and together we will seek God’s answers. I won’t ask you to believe anything just because I believe it, but you and I can both ask each other to believe and do what we clearly see in the Bible. What do you say?”

Response Three:

“There is a lot of confusion today about who’s going to heaven. I’m glad you want to make sure that you yourself will be there. Let me ask you something. If you died tonight, are you sure – nothing doubting – that you would go to live with God? If yes, would you tell me what makes you so sure? If no, would you like to learn about the instructions that God has given in the Bible?” †

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“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (Matthew 7:21-23)

Footwear

Paul Holland

“Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment ...would [betray] what life we have led,” wrote Shakespeare.

Some people love shoes. Some people are addicted to shoe-buying. Others are not so impulsive, but do have a plethora of footwear — far more than the average man thinks is necessary!

National Geographic, September 2006, had an article entitled, “Every Shoe Tells a Story”. The author, Cathy Newman, details a history of footwear and the practicality of various types — sagebrush bark fiber was used in the early stages of this country’s history. A stainless steel, polyester and aluminum space boot will be used on the moon.

Spiritually speaking, what does your footwear say about the life you lead? Listen to Paul’s words about our God-provided armor: “...as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the Gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). Notice Paul’s words that our feet are to be clothed, not with the Gospel, but with “readiness”. Our feet are to be shod with “readiness”.

Are you ready? Do you know that you know what you know? Are you ready to defend the existence of God? Do you know the four major arguments for the existence of God? Are you ready to defend the nature of God as it is depicted in the Bible? Can you defend the deity of Christ? Why do you believe that Jesus is the Savior? Do you have any reason stronger than “that’s just what I believe”? Are you ready to defend the doctrine that the Bible is God’s Word, inspired by the Spirit and without error?

With what are your feet shod? Readiness? Silence? Reticence? Complacency? Compromise? The apostle Peter writes: “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

If we want to evangelize our community, we’ve got to put “readiness” on our feet. What story does your footwear tell about you? What are you wearing today? Bible classes on Sundays and Wednesdays are designed to help all of us be prepared. ✚

Paul Holland works with the Paris Church of Christ in Paris, Tennessee, USA.

When I Come to Worship

Michael L. King

The writer James, in his epistle by the same name, acknowledged the goodness of God and the natural response to it by means of worship. This epistle has been referenced as an “exposition of practical Christianity”, and it certainly lives up to this expression in James 1:18-22.

James depicts God as being the source of heavenly gifts (verse 17). Whatever is good in life has come from God; whatever is evil has come from man himself. In actuality, man can receive nothing except it comes from heaven (John 3:27). Man would have been oblivious to God’s goodness and gift-giving without the Word of truth having been given to enable us to receive His providing, enabling us to become producers as His creatures (James 1:18). Since the will of God is good and infinitely pure, it is natural to expect all that is produced thereby to be pure and holy as well. An astonishing harvest has been reaped, both among the Jews and Gentiles, from the time of the establishment of the new covenant which was promised hundreds of years before by Jeremiah (31:31-34) and realized through our fellowship in Christ (Ephesians 1:3; 2 Peter 1:3). It is by being in the Lord’s church that we learn about, and acknowledge through the avenue of worship, how good and perfect those gifts are, just how much we appreciate them, and that we are indebted for them.

When we come to worship and pay tribute to the great Gift-Giver, we are to be “swift to hear”. There is an old rabbinical adage that says, “The righteous speak little, and do much; the wicked speak much, and do nothing.” There is a correlation between wisdom and refraining the lips. Sin is found in a multitude of words, but the wise restrain their speaking (Proverbs 10:19). Adam Clarke observes that, “Those who are hasty in speech are generally of a peevish or angry disposition” (notes on James 1:19). The hasty does not consider what he says and is more likely to be soon angry. When entering into a “divine worship service”

WORSHIP

to communicate our love and devotion to God, we must be free of anything that would void that worship (Ecclesiastes 5:1,2). The wise man warned that because we are of the earth, we should not be rash with our words or let our heart be hasty, so “*let [our] words be few.*” When the wrath of man collides with the righteousness of God, man shorts out his attempt to honor the Gift-Giver for “*every good and perfect gift*”. Man’s learning of God comes in patient listening to His Word, not in impulsive empty verbiage.

Dragging sin into the presence of God is a negating force in our lives as well. James had spoken in verse 15 about the “three generations of evil”: lust, sin, and death, and that the progressive capturing of our bodies would eventually lead to spiritual death or severance from God. In verse 21, he demonstrates that the Word cannot be received as long as the heart is filled to overflowing with naughtiness. It is similar to a child having gorged himself on candy and not having an appetite at dinnertime. When our “*hunger and thirst for righteousness*” (Matthew 5:6) has been foundered by passions and fruits of “*overflowing wickedness*”, we no longer crave righteousness or our “*Father of lights*” from whom all heavenly blessings flow without varying (James 1:17). So, we must “*lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*” (Hebrews 12:1). Peter agreed with James and instructed accordingly, “*...laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking...that you may grow thereby*” (1 Peter 2:1,2).

Readers of James’ message had heard the true doctrine of righteousness and believed it, but they had not put it to any practical use (James 1:22ff). Hearing and belief are inadequate in and of themselves, but require *doing* (James 2:14-19). Jesus informed those who would be followers of Him that, “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of my father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). One who is born of God cannot continue to sin, for God’s seed remains in him (1 John 3:7-10). He who hears and does is like the man who built his house upon a rock, but the foolish man’s affections are base and he settles for a sand foundation, constituting his ultimate ruin (Luke 6:46-49).

When we come to worship, it should be our ambition to hear from our heavenly Father, respond by speaking less and listening more, eliminating everything that resembles naughtiness and that would interfere with our devotion to God, and get down to serious business in being doers of the Word. †

Michael L. King preaches for the New Albany congregation in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

An Age-Old, But Strange, Problem

Charles Cash

Here is the portrait of a man who could not wait to go to worship. He is consumed with an insatiable desire to be in the presence of God. Though God is found in all places and is always near, the writer longs for a particular experience, worship in Jerusalem (probably at feast time). For him, worship was not an option, but rather a burning necessity. The late Gus Nichols once wrote, "I never have to make a decision whether to go to worship or not go; I made that decision sixty-five years ago when I became a Christian." Put another way, he was simply saying, "I made my commitment to Christ years ago." There is an old saying, "We make many decisions, but only one commitment." The psalmist had apparently made a commitment to God.

Basically, man has two kinds of needs: inherent needs and acquired needs. The need for food, water, air and companionship is inherent within the makeup of man because God made him that way. Then we acquire, through habit mostly, the need for many other things. Some acquired needs are wholesome and good, leading to a fuller and happier life; some are bad for us and lead to irreparable harm. Worship falls into the first category of needs because inherent within man is the need to worship some thing or being higher than himself. There has hardly ever been any tribe of people, or any nation, that did not worship something. This is plainly seen in the language, literature, and history of these nations. Why is that? What is the answer? God! It is the result of God's design.

It has been said, "Worship carries man to the very height of his human existence." But this compulsion to worship can be suppressed and negated through neglect, or intensified and made more acute through habit and practice.

Jesus tells us that God seeks those who will "*worship the Father in spirit and truth*" (John 4:23). The early church was admonished, "*Let us not give up (not forsaking-KJV) meeting together; as some are in the habit of doing*" (Hebrews 10:25). God is plainly addressing the habit, or problem, of neglecting worship. Yes, it is an age-old problem!

For the Christian, worship answers a basic need to be in the presence of God to give Him praise and recognition as the creator and sustainer of life. After all, "*He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else...For in Him we live and move and have our being*" (Acts 17:25,28). We not only come to worship to bring our God a message of praise, adoration, love, and submission, but also to receive spiritual rejuvenation and enrichment. The late Marshall Keeble likened it to

WORSHIP

coming to a gas station for refueling your automobile. We are spiritually refreshed and strengthened by the singing of hymns together with fellow Christians, by prayer, by observing the Lord's Supper, and by listening to the Word of God preached and applied to our everyday lives. Our presence encourages and strengthens others. The Christian will find this nowhere else! As far as individual Christians are concerned, there is absolutely no substitute for this "assembly". †

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WHEN I WAS ABSENT FROM WORSHIP

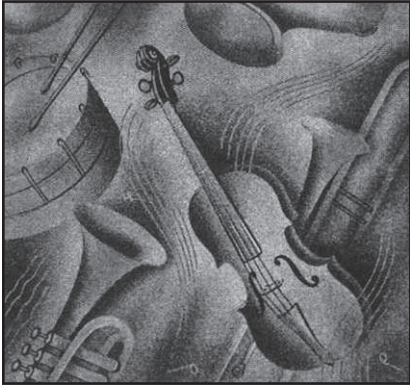
J.A. McNutt

1. It made some people question the reality of my religious faith (James 2:17).
2. It set an example of neglecting the assembly and failing to obey an inspired command (Hebrews 10:25).
3. I failed to observe the example set by the early church in partaking of the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7).
4. It made it impossible for the elders of the church to see that the entire flock was fed or taught the Word of God (Acts 20:28).
5. It indicated that I was not concerned about assembling with my brethren and the Lord's promise to be in our midst (Matthew 18:20).
6. Some must have concluded that I found more pleasure in fellowship with the world than with the Lord and my brethren (2 Corinthians 6:14).
7. I set the wrong example before my children and before others who were influenced by my absence (1 Timothy 4:12).
8. If I chose to be absent on a pleasure trip and made no plans to worship God, it would prove that I love the Lord too little and the world too much (2 Timothy 4:10).
9. It set a pattern of irregular church attendance, violating the steadfastness in teaching, fellowship, and worship which was practiced by the apostolic church (Acts 2:42-47).
10. On the day that I willfully chose to be absent, I failed to walk in the light and did not enjoy the fellowship of my brethren (1 John 1:7). †

WORSHIP

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC: TOO LATE

Dalton Key



Many religious scholars believe that mechanical instruments of music were first introduced into public worship in 510 A.D. Others contend that Pope Vitalian introduced them in 660. Still others considered expert in the field point to 951, 1250, or even 1290 as possible dates.

But what does it matter when instruments were first introduced? If they were brought in after the days of the New Testament, and thus without sanction, authority, or even consideration from inspired penmen, they came too

late and with no justification.

The early church was taught and encouraged to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); not a word of New Testament Scripture authorizes any other form of music in Christian worship.

We should have little interest in what worshipers were or were not doing in the sixth, seventh, tenth, or thirteenth centuries. But we should care, and we can be certain, what faithful brethren were doing in worship during the days of the apostles.

New Testament Christians were heeding the words of heaven, words which still read today as they have read for centuries: *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:19).

The early Christians simply sang, as should we. †

Dalton Key is the Editor of *Old Paths* and is also the preacher for the 10th & Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

If instruments of music were brought in after the days of the New Testament, and thus without sanction, authority, or even consideration from inspired penmen, they came too late and with no justification.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Bird Watching

Paula Bates

1. Behold the _____ of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into _____; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Matthew 6:26
2. There shall the great _____ make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the _____ also be gathered, everyone with her own mate. Isaiah 34:15
3. And all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of _____, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold, none were of _____: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. For the King had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish bringing gold and silver, ivory and _____, and _____. I Kings 10:21-22
4. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the _____: for the King of Israel is come out to seek a _____, as one hunts a _____ in the mountains. 1 Samuel 26:20
5. But these are they of which you shall not eat: the _____, and the ossifrage, and the _____. Deuteronomy 14:12
6. And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the _____ of the sea and over the _____ of the air, and over the _____, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." Genesis 1:26



- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Fowls, barns | 4. Lord, flea, partridge |
| 2. Owl, vultures | 5. Eagle, osprey |
| 3. Gold, silver, apes, peacocks | 6. Fish, fowl, cattle |

flexibility

David Deffenbaugh

Flexibility is a part of successfully living the Christian life in many ways.

Repentance demands flexibility. Not everyone lost in sin can be approached the same way or taught the same way. Yes, there is only one Gospel that can save, but how that Gospel is conveyed can and must vary. Paul said, *"I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some"* (1 Corinthians 9:22). That was flexibility. Jesus demonstrated a mastery of flexibility. To a woman who came to a well to draw water He spoke of living water (John 4:7-13); to a Jewish ruler He spoke of being born again (John 3:1-3).

Living like Christ demands flexibility. Paul tells us to have the mind (or attitude) of Christ just after having encouraged Christians to regard one another as more important than themselves (Philippians 2:3-5). Insisting on having my needs met or having things done my way is neither flexible nor Christ-like.

Marriage demands flexibility. Husbands are instructed to live with their wives in an understanding way (1 Peter 3:7), and wives are instructed to be in submission to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22). Successful marriages include a lot of flexibility.

Someone has observed that the same wind can topple a large tree but leave a sapling virtually unscathed. Why? It has a lot to do with flexibility.

Though it may not be a direct biblical quote, it certainly reflects biblical principle, "Blessed are the flexible..." ✚



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

WHEN TROUBLE COMES

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

It is reasonable to expect trouble and trials in this life. Christians are not exempt from them. Paul had more than his share of them.

We experience troubles in our families, from our friends, on the job, in school, in the nation, and even in the church. They come in all forms — criticism, persecution, illness, death of loved ones, finances, and spiritual reverses.

Why does God permit us to have troubles? Is it because He doesn't care or love us? James said, *"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials"* (James 1:2). How can there be joy in trial? James emphasizes the joyful results of trial.

Trial separates the chaff from the wheat. It removes the dross and refines our faith. It proves the genuineness of our faith. True faith is made even stronger by trouble.

Robert Johnstone writes:

James shows that where there is but an empty profession, or a mere dreamy sentiment, unbased on firm and intelligent convictions of truth, the fire of trouble will burn it up. But where there is true faith, affliction naturally leads to deeper thought on sin and its deserts than under other circumstances, and thus frees the heart from the control of self-righteousness. The sense of weakness leads to earnest wrestling with God in prayer; and experience of the sustaining grace thus obtained strengthens and exhilarates hope with regard to the time to come.

Thus, we can understand why some melt under pressure, while others shine brighter than others. Trials strengthen true faith. Trials humble us. They wean us away from mundane things. They intensify our hope. But, how can I endure trial when it comes? James speaks of several things required:

1. A joyous attitude – *"Count it all joy"* (James 1:2)
2. An understanding mind – *"Knowing this"* (James 1:3)
3. A submissive will – *"Let patience have her perfect work"* (James 1:4)
4. A believing heart – *"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering"* (James 1:6-8)
5. A humble spirit - *"The brother of low degree is exalted"* (James 1:9-11)

Continue to feed and nourish your faith so that when the storms come and trials appear, you may "come forth as gold". †

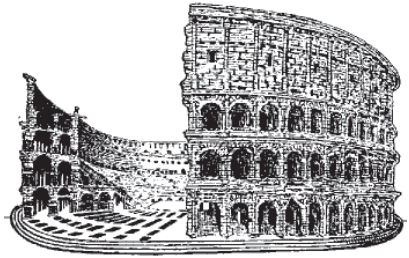
Clarence DeLoach, Jr. has preached for many years and now lives in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Who's Who at Rome

Bob Prichard

The last chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans is sort of a "Who's Who" of the church at Rome. Paul mentions some 35 different men and women who he describes in a number of ways. He begins by saying, "*Greet Priscilla and Aquilla, my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*" He salutes "*my well beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ.*" He sends greetings to "*Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.*" He also salutes "*Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord,*" as well as "*Apelles, approved in Christ*" (Romans 16:3,4,7,6,12,10).

Despite his status as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul recognized that he needed others to help him succeed in ministry. He remembered others and took the time to tell them how much they meant to him. Besides his epistles to individuals such as Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, his general letters are filled with the names of individuals who helped him along the way.



Paul was like every Gospel preacher who has come along since — we all need the help and support of others, many of whom are the unsung, behind-the-scenes sort of people on whom you can always count. Not only was Paul's ministry enriched by the help of others, I know that I have been blessed immeasurably, and could have done little of what I have been able to accomplish without the help of others.

How long has it been since you sent a note to someone to offer thanks for the help and support you have received, as Paul did? Who would be on your "Who's Who" list? And how about thanking the Lord? "*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Philippians 4:6). Our prayers and supplications need to be bathed with thanksgiving. Let the Lord, and those who have helped you, know you care. †

Bob Prichard preaches for the Oxford Church of Christ in Oxford, Alabama, USA.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

The identity of the author of Hebrews is a mystery. Through the centuries commentators have speculated on Paul, Luke, Barnabas, and even Priscilla as the author. Origen put it aptly: *“But who wrote the epistle, God only knows certainly”* (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25).

The original readers of the epistle of Hebrews are likewise unknown, though most speculate that they

were probably Jewish Christians. But more to the point, what were they like? What was happening in their congregation that moved the author to write?

Weary, Discouraged Christians

I am convinced that the author of Hebrews was writing to a group of tired, weary Christians. He defines his epistle as a *“word of exhortation”* (Hebrews 13:22). Why write encouragement? Clearly, because the readers were discouraged! Viewed through this lens, the Book of Hebrews can become a marvelous tool for encouragement. All of us become discouraged at one time or another. So what do you say to someone who is tired and ready to give up?

The Hebrews author urges us to *“run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (Hebrews 12:1). Employing the language of athletic competition, he reminds us that the Christian race is not

a sprint, requiring a brief burst of energy, but a long distance race, requiring heart and endurance.

Then he reminds his down-hearted readers that when the Christian suffers, it is not the accidental stumbling of fate, but the loving action

of our Father in heaven, designed to discipline His sons. *“My son,”* He says, *“do not despise the chastening of the Lord,*

nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him” (Hebrews 12:5).

It is not sinful to become weary and discouraged. It is not evil to be despondent. It is dangerous, however, for now you are vulnerable to various temptations.

Drifting Away

He is concerned, not so much with open rebellion as He is that they will *“drift away”* (Hebrews 2:1). Imagine a boat originally tied to a dock that has somehow become loose from its moorings. The drift is gradual, almost imperceptible, but by the time we become aware of our state, we are far from shore. What begins as discouragement leads to our becoming lost. When we drift, where will we drift to?

Some of the Hebrew Christians were *“forsaking the assembling”* of themselves together, the classic sign of a discouraged Christian (Hebrews



Don't Quit
Stan Mitchell

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

10:25). This is not so much condemnation as explanation. Missing worship is a symptom of the underlying problem, namely discouragement.

The writer draws from the image of the pilgrim on a journey. At first, the day was cool and fresh, and the pilgrims had set out with energy and vigor. But now the day had grown hot, the grade had become steep, and the sun had begun to beat down on them. They might have seen the shade on the side of the road, and longed to simply lie down and rest. The writer urges them, however, to *“strengthen the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees”* (Hebrews 12:12).

There might be many reasons for discouragement. Poor health might take away our energy for the task. Bickering among brethren is both disillusioning and energy consuming. Criticism from brethren or the loss of a loved one might wound us, impairing our ability to serve Christ.

Solutions

There are ways to overcome discouragement, however. He reminds us that there is a time for rest, at the end of our labors (Hebrews 4:9), not before. We need to keep our eye on the goal, *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2). Discouraged people have lost sight of their purpose; they have forgotten their original goal. The writer tries to refocus our attention on Jesus.

He urges us to dig “a little deeper in the well” (Hebrews 5:11-14). We simply cannot sustain the “hits” that life throws at us if we are existing, spiritually speaking, on a diet of Twinkies and marshmallows. A return to a diet of the meat of the Word will give us the substance we need to survive.

He reminds us that we have corporate responsibilities. We are to *“exhort one another daily”* (Hebrews 3:13); in our assemblies, we are to consider “how to stir” one another up to *“love and good works”* (Hebrews 10:24). We are not only to lift our own weary arms and knees for the journey, but to *“make straight paths”* so that others on the journey, the *“lame,”* might be *“healed”* (Hebrews 12:13). We are to lift the spirits of those around us, not only the weak and the vulnerable, but our leaders, too.

But most importantly, he reminds us that we serve an incomparable Christ. In order to revive the discouraged, we must dig beneath the surface, the gimmicks, and the mimicking of the latest church growth techniques. The Hebrews writer asks us to “consider” Jesus, the Savior without analogy, *“who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2). A tired, weary church begins its revival by looking to Christ, and to Christ alone. ✚

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The Heart/Mind

Todd O'Donnell

You will notice in the Bible that the English words “heart” and “mind” are used interchangeably on a number of occasions. We see that the word “heart” does not always have reference to the organ that pumps blood around our body, but has reference to that part of us that has the ability to think and reason. I do not know for sure why the heart is used to represent our mind. I think perhaps it has something to do with the position of our heart (being at the center of our body), and maybe the fact that our heart gives the rest of our body life.

In New Zealand we know that the number one killer, physically, is heart disease. More people die of heart disease in New Zealand than any other medical problem known to us. Many of us watched a recent documentary on television, “Fighting Fat, Fighting Fit” in which we found that our diet and exercise (or lack of it) are the biggest contributors to our heart disease problem. Did you notice that it is what we put into our bodies and what we don’t do with our bodies that are killing us physically?

I believe that the number one killer of us spiritually is, again, “heart” disease. It is disease of the mind. And one major contributor to this is an unhealthy diet. Paul says in Philippians 4:8, *“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your **mind** dwell on these things.”* Why, Paul? Why dwell on these things? Because the writer of Proverbs was right as he wrote, *“For as he thinks within himself, so he is”* (Proverbs 23:7). If we put worldliness into our minds, then our lives are going to end up worldly. We must watch our spiritual diet. Peter said, *“...like new born babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation....”* We must take the opportunities that exist to feed our minds on



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good things: Sunday classes and worship, mid-week classes, devotionals, personal study, youth groups, ladies classes, etc.

Are you starving? Are you undernourished spiritually? Then look at your diet — you are probably not eating enough.

The second major contributor to spiritual unhealthiness is lack of exercise. Philippians 4:9 says, *“The things you have learned and received and heard from me, **practice** these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.”* It does no good to study God’s Word and hear it preached if we are not going to put it into practice. That is why James (1:22) said, *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”* And In 2 Peter 1:10 Peter said, *“...as long as you **practice** these things [spiritual things] you will never stumble.”*

Jesus let us know why it is so important to get our minds right: *“But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders”* (Matthew 15:18,19). The way we think is going to determine the way we live. Protect your heart, protect your mind. If garbage goes in, then garbage will come out. †

Todd O'Donnell is a worker for the Lord in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

The Golden Rule

Thomas Baxley

There are many in the past who have given us many rules by which to live: the Iron rule, the Silver Rule and the Golden Rule. The Iron rule is “might makes right”. It cares nothing about justice or mercy, but is concerned only with power. The Silver rule is “Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you”. The Golden Rule, contrary to popular belief, is not “the one with the gold rules,” but “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). While there is a close resemblance between the Silver and Gold rules, there is a very stark distinction between the two. The Silver Rule is very passive and reactive; it gives no calling for service to others. While it looks good on the surface from afar, upon closer inspection it is found to be quite selfish. The people of God are to be a people of active service to one another. This is the Law and the Prophets. †

The Root of Pride

Kevin Cauley

“But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, ‘Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?’ So he turned and went away in a rage” (1 Kings 5:11,12).

I know a little bit about anger and pride. It is a set of sins that I have struggled with for many years.

I am fortunate that, over the years, I have had some good brothers help me with these issues. Some have helped me out of real concern; others, not so much, but God has been working all that time, and I accept His correction in whatever form it comes.

The root of pride is the ego, and the ego is based in the flesh. Consider Jesus’ words in Mark 7:21-23: *“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”* Paul tells us that these are all works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21).

Pride is deceitful and insidious, and it is easy to be deceived by pride. We tend to rationalize our behavior, and practice self justification. This is what Naaman did. After he went away from Elisha, he rationalized his anger by telling himself that he was worth more than what God had to offer him: a seven-fold baptism in the Jordan River. He thought he was increasing his value by comparing himself to the prophet’s hand waving gestures, and his own homeland. He really



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only cheapened himself. A person is so much more valuable than an impressive showing, or a clean river.

This is why pride is such a problem: it reduces persons to things, and causes us not to love ourselves as God loves us, and God loves us much more than we will ever know. After all, He gave the life of His Son for us (John 3:16). How much was the Son of God worth? Telling ourselves that we are worth less than what God tells us we are worth is the worst kind of self-deceit, because we can't properly love our brother if we don't love ourselves. Jesus said, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"* (Matthew 22:39). We can make an effort at it, but we will not get very far before we become discouraged with ourselves and give up.

The flesh is deceitful, making us think that we are worth some worldly object. This is why the apostle Paul told us not to be deceived by it: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting"* (Galatians 6:7,8). Pride sows to the flesh, and it will destroy us if it goes unchecked.

I have often had this question asked to me over the years: "Is there such a thing as good pride?" Recently a friend told me that he never read such in his Bible. I've never read such either. I have read this verse: *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"* (Proverbs 16:18). I've always read this verse as if the words "destruction" and "fall" were very bad things, and it does depend upon what kind of destruction and fall one has, but more recently, I've learned that "destruction" and "falling" can be very good things if directed in the right way. Paul wrote, *"And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). There is always hope, but let us not think that we can sin that grace may come (Romans 6:1). †

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Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17).

PROVERBS 17:22



A young woman was brought before the judge in the traffic court to answer for a ticket she received for driving through a red light. She explained to the judge that she was a schoolteacher and requested an immediate disposal of her case so she could get to the school on time.

A wild gleam came into the judge's eyes. "You're a schoolteacher, eh? Madam, I shall realize my lifelong ambition. I've waited years to have a schoolteacher in this court. Now sit down at that table and write 'I will not drive through red lights' 500 times!"



The owner of a priceless collection of antiques allowed a museum to exhibit his treasures. The movers packed the vases while the collector hovered over them. "Do be careful," he cautioned one burly mover. "That vase is nearly two thousand years old."

"Oh, don't you worry for one minute. I'll treat it like it was brand new."



Fred was talking to his young grandson about people in the Bible. He told the boy that Methuselah lived to be 969 years old. His grandson thought about this for a few seconds and then asked, "Pawpaw, did you know him?"



A nearsighted preacher glanced at the note that Mrs. Jones had sent to him by an usher. The note read: "Bill Jones having gone to sea, his wife desires the prayers of the congregation for his safety."

Failing to observe the punctuation, the preacher startled his audience by announcing: "Bill Jones, having gone to see his wife, desires the prayers of the congregation for his safety."



A company offered tours through the city's historic district, led by guides dressed in colonial clothing. While leading a group, one of the guides tripped and fell, breaking his wrist.

He went to the hospital, and as he sat waiting in the emergency room, a fellow walked by and then did a double-take as

PROVERBS 17:22

he noticed the 18th century clothing. He asked the guide, “Just how long have you been waiting?”



So just what CAN we eat?

Can't eat beef...mad cow.

Can't eat chicken...bird flu.

Can't eat eggs...again, bird flu.

Can't eat pork...swine flu.

Can't eat fish...heavy metals in the water have poisoned their meat.

Can't eat fruits and veggies...insecticides and herbicides.

Hmmmm! I believe that leaves
CHOCOLATE!



Our neighbors had a terrible disagreement over a patio they wanted for their backyard. The wife had rather expensive ideas, while the husband wanted costs kept to a minimum. The wife won out, and the construction bill climbed higher and higher.

I dropped by one day when the patio was near completion. I was surprised to find the husband smiling from ear to ear as the workmen smoothed over the surface. I remarked how nice it was to see a grin replace the frown he had been wearing lately.

He replied, “You see where they’re smoothing that cement? I just threw my wife’s credit cards in there.”



A customer at Harry’s Gourmet Grocery marveled at the proprietor’s quick wit and intelligence.

“Tell me, Harry, what makes you so smart?”

“Ron, I wouldn’t share my secret with just anyone,” Harry replied, lowering his voice so the other shoppers couldn’t hear. “But since you’re a good and faithful customer, I’ll let you in on my secret: Fish heads. You eat enough of them, you’ll be positively brilliant.”

“You sell them here?” Ron asked. “Yes, sir,” said Harry. “Only \$4 apiece.”

Ron bought three. A week later, he was back in the store complaining that the fish heads were disgusting and he wasn’t any smarter.

Harry said, “You just haven’t eaten enough of them.”

Ron went home with 20 more fish heads. Two weeks later, he was back and this time he was really angry.

“Hey, Harry, you’re selling me fish heads for \$4 apiece when I can buy the whole fish for \$2. You’re ripping me off!”

Harry answered, “Congratulations, Ron! See, you’re much smarter already!”



Instead of talking to your plants, if you yelled at them would they still grow, only to be troubled and insecure?

Motherhood

Raymond Elliott

It is always good to remember a godly mother. Jesus, while on the cross of shame and suffering, thought of His mother and instructed John to care for her after His death (John 19:26,27). One of the sweetest words in any language is “Mother”. A dictionary is not necessary to possess an understanding of such a meaningful term. Not all mothers are wives, but they should be, and not all wives are mothers, but God permitting, they can be. One of the primary purposes of marriage is the propagating of the human race (Genesis 1:27). The role of motherhood should never be taken lightly, nor should the status of being a mother be made light of in this modern age. There is no greater relation for a woman to sustain in this life than being a Christian mother.

Perhaps the crowning act of creation by the Lord God was the forming of woman from the side of man. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, thus He gave to him a help suitable for him. Adam later named this woman “Eve” because she was the *“mother of all living”* (Genesis 2:18-25; 3:20). The wise man taught that *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing”* and that *“a prudent wife is from Jehovah”* (Proverbs 18:18; 19:14). In the bringing forth of a child, the husband and wife truly become one flesh. There is the binding together of the two. Motherhood is the highest honor given to woman. No matter what else she may do in life, it should be secondary to her being the kind of mother that God desires.

A mother is greatly responsible for the spiritual training of her children (Proverbs 22:6). Her influence is great for good or bad. Abraham Lincoln said of his mother, “All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.” An old Spanish proverb states that “An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.” Most of us have heard the old saying that “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” No doubt Queen Jezebel exerted a tremendous amount of evil influence on her husband Ahab and their wicked son Ahaziah (1 Kings 16:30; 22:52,53). Several years ago “Ma Barker” trained her sons to rob, steal, and to kill. It was said that the infamous Nero had a murderess for a mother.

However, the Bible is replete with examples of godly mothers who influenced their loved ones to live for the Lord. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, guided that young heart in the right way because when he became an adult, he *“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment*

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with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Numbers 26:59; Hebrews 11:24,25). No doubt students of the Bible know of the beautiful story of Hannah and how she received a son from the Lord. This wonderful woman had promised that she would give the child *“unto the Lord all the days of his life.”* Hannah named her son Samuel. This young boy, at a tender age, was carried to the house of God to be taught and trained by Eli, the high priest of God (1 Samuel 1). Samuel became one of the truly outstanding leaders in Israel, serving God and His people as prophet, priest, and judge. If there were more Hannahs in the homes there would be more preachers in the pulpits.

**If there were more Hannahs in the homes
there would be more preachers in the pulpits.**

Jedidah was the wife of the wicked king Amon, but she was also the mother of the young and good Josiah (2 Kings 22:1)). In contrast to the wickedness of his father, it is said of Josiah that *“he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left* (2 Kings 22:2). We must conclude that his good mother, and perhaps Jeremiah the prophet, exerted a godly influence upon Josiah.

Then consider the mother of John the Baptist, Elizabeth, who walked righteously before God, *“walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”* (Luke 1:6). We also learn that she was determined to name her son “John” (Luke 1:13,60). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was blessed greatly by having been chosen of God to give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:42). Mary was a typical mother in many ways. For instance, she treasured in her heart the things said about the baby Jesus and, later, the things which He said (Luke 2:19,51).

Finally, we mention the grandmother and mother of Timothy. These two godly women, Lois and Eunice, had taught Timothy from his earliest childhood *“the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus* (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14,15). These are some of the godly mothers mentioned in the Bible who are worthy of imitation by Christian mothers today.

A virtuous mother is industrious, as is brought out by the passage of Scripture in Proverbs 31:10-31. Certainly the daily chores of a mother are demanding. She

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is also considerate of the needs of others in her community. Dorcas was one who was “*full of good works and almsdeeds*” (Acts 9:36,39). The widow who was to be enrolled by the church must have been “*well reported of for good work...if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work*” (1 Timothy 5:10). Also the Christian mother and wife will be hospitable. Again from 1 Timothy 5:10, “*...if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints feet.*” From Hebrews 13:2, “*Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*” The Shunammite woman manifested a wonderful attitude of such hospitality in regards to the prophet Elisha, as recorded in 2 Kings 4:8-37. This quality of hospitality makes the home pleasant where people love to visit.

We need always to show our respect and honor to our mothers, whether they are living or have died (Ephesians 6:1,2). We can do this by living for the Lord and being the proper influence for good among our peers. †

DEDICATED to MOTHERS in the HOMES

Grace Crowell

So long as there are homes to which
Men turn at close of day,
So long as there are homes where
Children are, and women stay,
If faith and love and loyalty are found
Across those sills,
A stricken nation can recover
From its grievous ills.
So long as there are homes where
Fires burn, and there is bread,
So long as there are homes where
Lamps are lit and prayers are said,
Though a people falter in darkness,
And nations grope,
With God Himself back of these little homes,
We still have hope.

Raymond Elliott preaches for the Capitol Heights congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Living Together Without Remorse

E. Claude Gardner

While preaching in a meeting with the church in Wurzburg, Germany, my wife and I took a side trip to Paris. As we returned on the train, we sat across the table from a twenty-six year old educated German girl who lived in Paris. After she made a friendly gesture to us, I then inquired about her family. As she related matters, she referred to living with her boyfriend. For four years they lived together, sharing expenses, but planned to marry the next year after she completed her advanced education. When she realized I had serious questions about her relationship (which she considered an “alternate lifestyle” without remorse), she asked me what I thought.

FORNICATORS

It must be assumed that during four years they had cohabited outside of marriage. God warns that this action is fornication. *“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Fornicators are engaged in the work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19).

In a true relationship between couples, three are involved — man, woman, and God. Jesus said, *“What therefore God had joined together...”* (Matthew 19:6). This talented young woman has left God out of the circle.

Should there be children born to those out of wedlock, they would always bear the stigma of being an “illegitimate child”.

In this kind of relationship there is no commitment, but in marriage when couples say, “I do,” they are committed to each other. In the fantasy relationship, one party can walk away, because there is no commitment or legal requirement.

Questions to consider: What is the attitude of one’s religion toward this plan? What do mothers think of the daughter’s practice? If a woman has daughters, would she approve of such actions? The answer given by this young lady indicated no concern would be given to cohabitation by anyone. She believes that in Europe this is a common practice.

MARRIAGE: A PILLAR OF SOCIETY

Marriage that is approved of God is a stable pillar of a strong nation. Illicit relations contribute to the weakening of a nation. This practice is already leading to weakness in nations. Today, only about five percent of the population in Europe are “church going”. How long can a nation survive that corrupts divine marriage? The

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answer is given by the Psalmist, *“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God”* (Psalm 9:17). The whole world should heed the warning.✠

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MARRIAGE IS HONORABLE IN ALL

Rodney Nulph

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). Sadly, we live in a time when many do not see marriage as an honorable joining together of male and female. In many homes, marriage is viewed as a prison instead of precious. However, the writer of Hebrews affirmed that marriage was in fact an honorable union. Interestingly, this idea of honorable carries with it the idea of something “of great price, precious, esteemed” (Thayer). Why would the Holy Spirit declare marriage to be honorable?

First, marriage is honorable in its derivation. Simply stated, marriage originated in the mind of God! Marriage is that wonderful and sacred institution designed by an All-Wise Creator for His creation. That fact alone causes it to be precious! When God created Adam in the paradise of Eden, He saw that man was all alone and needed a helpmeet (cf. Genesis 2:18). In that wonderful garden so many centuries ago, God created woman to be a helper and encourager to her husband. He instituted and regulated the honorable union of eligible male with eligible female, thus creating marriage, a truly honorable relationship.

Secondly, marriage is honorable in its duration. Sadly, we live in an age where many do not revere this God-given union. God Himself ordained marriage, and He expects us to uphold that sacred union for life! Jesus, in His masterful teaching, gave but **one** reason (outside of death) for this honorable institution to ever be separated (cf. Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-9). “Until death do us part” must not be just a catchy phrase uttered at a wedding ceremony! The marriage bond, contrary to what many believe, is a lifelong commitment. **Marriage is not disposable!** Often, Americans rejoice with their mates until something “better” comes along. How sad and how tragic! Contrary to what many Americans say (which includes some false teachers and preachers of God’s Word), the Bible still says, *“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth”* (Proverbs 5:18). The precious relationship given by God is for better or for worse and until death do us part. Marriage is honorable in its duration!

Although surrounded by a world that does not revere and uphold the preciousness of the marriage bond, may we, as God’s children, understand that marriage is truly an honorable relationship — honorable in its derivation and in its duration, marriage is honorable in all! May God bless our marriages as we honor and cherish them for life!✠

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THE JOURNEY OF MOTHERHOOD

Dan R. Owen

God, who loves all people and wants them to be saved, has entrusted the children of this world to mothers. There is no greater role played in the development of an individual than the role of a mother. Today, we in the family of God rise up and call mothers blessed. We express to our mothers, young and old, how much we love them, respect them, and thank God for them.

The journey of motherhood begins with the excitement of a new life. There is an indescribable thrill in knowing that a life is growing inside one's own body. There is a sense of mystery and wonder during the months of pregnancy as the mother becomes more and more aware of the tiny person inside her. There is the joy and amazement of birth, and the life-changing experience of receiving the blessed child into one's arms for the first time. It is truly a wonderful thing to become a mother.

The journey continues in self-sacrifice. In the lives of mothers, we get close to the self-sacrificing nature of Christ. Surely, mothers "lay down their lives" for their children as they submit themselves, body and soul, to the needs of the children God has given them. From midnight feedings, to caring for a sick child, to changing multitudes of diapers, to bathing, to cleaning up spills, to providing a taxi service for soccer games, little league, and gymnastics, mothers give themselves daily in pursuit of their children's welfare. They share vicariously in joy and in sorrow with their children. They are willing to go to any lengths, no matter what the cost, to ensure the health and welfare of their children.

The journey of motherhood is a soul-shaping journey. Mothers teach bedtime prayers. They talk with kids about God. They teach their children Bible stories and reason with them about what is right and wrong. Godly mothers provide their children with experiences which help them grow spiritually. They mold not only the bodies and minds of their children, but their very souls.

As life goes on, mothers serve as a bulwark for the soul. When life gets painful, stressful, and difficult, mothers give us strength to go on. When we are sad, they provide tenderness and understanding. When we are discouraged, they encourage, and when we are uncertain, they reassure. Godly women do this for their own children and for others as they grow old. God's power works through their influence in ever-widening circles, affecting the lives of all they touch.

The power of heaven is in the hands of mothers. In their life's journey they are blessed nurturers, self-sacrificers, soul shapers, and a strength to our weary souls. Thank God for godly mothers! We never stop needing them! ✚

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Bring Children to Jesus

Jim Poland

The touch of Jesus is essential to the young. Children teach us how to accept the kingdom of God. Christ Jesus is the King.



People were bringing their children to Jesus so He could touch them. Mark 10:13-16 records: *“Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them: but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever*

does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

We aren’t told how old they were, but we assume that they were under twelve, which was the Jewish age of religious accountability.

Their parents had seen, and heard of, and experienced what Jesus’ touch could do. His touch healed the leper (Mark 1:41), healed afflictions (Mark 3:10), made many well (Mark 6:56), and made the mute to speak and the deaf to hear (Mark 7:32-37).

But Jesus’ disciples tried to keep the young children away. They rebuked the ones who brought them to Jesus. Why? Perhaps they felt Jesus’ time was too valuable to be spent on children.

Sometimes people deny the touch of Jesus to their children because they feel that their time and energy are too valuable to use for Bible teaching and devotions with them. Yet, it is when they are young that they are the most open, teachable, and impressionable!

When Jesus saw them holding the children back from Him, He was *“greatly displeased”* (He was moved with indignation)! Jesus desired to have children brought to Him (Mark 10:14).

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To bring children to Jesus is not just to bring them to Sunday School and church services or to promote some church program for them. These may be good and needed, but we must bring children in contact with the power of God's Word so they can learn of the love and force of Jesus' life. It is teaching and training in Bible knowledge in the home that does this. More than this, it is giving them first-hand examples of the lives of father and mother and grandparents being blessed in His kingdom, the church of Christ. It is practicing the life of Christ before their eyes (Ephesians 6:1-4; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Proverbs 22:6).

Children exemplify the right attitudes. They realize that they are dependent upon others for everything (even though they will at times exert their independence). At first, all they know how to do is cry out total dependence (Mark 10:15). They are trusting, receptive, honest, teachable, indiscriminate, meek, hungering for righteousness, seeking approval, merciful, pure in heart, eager to grow, rejoicing, etc. These are attitudes of Jesus' subjects. They look to Jesus as the King and their only hope.

But, if young children are kept from Jesus' touch by our ignorance and neglect of their spiritual training in His Word, then the world will touch them. Satan's workers will teach them to covet, hate, cheat, lie, sass, curse, deceive, lust, doubt, and distrust. Let us give diligence that they do not learn these things from the lives of their parents and others.

Jesus gives a sharp warning. If we do not receive Him as children do, and if we lead them in the wrong way, we cannot be His people!

Jesus gave blessed assurance as *"He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them"* (Mark 10:16). If we do receive Him as King of our lives, we will receive the touch of His hand of healing from our sins (Acts 2:38), the comfort of His acceptance (Acts 2:47), and the blessings that only He can bestow (Acts 4:12). †

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If young children are kept from Jesus' touch by our ignorance and neglect of their spiritual training in His Word, then the world will touch them. Satan's workers will teach them to covet, hate, cheat, lie, sass, curse, deceive, lust, doubt, and distrust.

Purpose in Life

Alex Gibson

Hello again! Today I wanted to go over a subject I personally struggle with a lot actually, that being *a purpose in life*. Now this is a subject that has a lot—and I mean a lot — of potential depth, so just bear with me because I’m going to move kind of fast on this one.

When most people talk about purpose in life they usually are looking for what they are supposed to do and finding their calling in this world. With respect, this is not the great purpose in life.

Let’s take a look at this from a spiritual perspective: *you are not a body with a soul, you have a body and are a soul*, and that soul is immortal whereas your body is not. So, for you to be looking for a calling for the life of that body is kind of shortsighted. With few exceptions most of us are not going to leave a lasting legacy in the material sense on this earth. If you find your way into the history books, great! You will be remembered for a long time but — for the rest of us — well, can you tell me much about your great grandparents or great-great grandparents? Probably not, and they are *your own ancestors!* Those of you who can, shoosh! I’m making a point that it doesn’t take long for what you’ve done in this life to fade in terms of importance.



HEY YOU KIDS!

“Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14). Job explained it like this: *“Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eye will never again see good. The eye of him who sees me will see me no more; While your eyes are upon me, I shall no longer be. As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, so he who goes down to the grave does not come up. He shall never return to his house, nor shall his place know him anymore”* (Job 7:7-10).

So where does that leave us? Well, as a soul you will find that the thinking here is not about what you *do* so much as your *character*. If the only thing you take with you when you die is your life-experience which has shaped and defined you as a soul, then that becomes one of the main features of your eternal drive.

But why should that matter? Well, here’s the second part: experience not only builds character but helps with the main reason why God created people in the first place. We are told, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself”* (Luke 10:27). To love someone, you have to have a relationship, and the type of love describes the type of relationship it is. So what does character have to do with that?

Ok, so now we tie the two together: your character provides depth to those relationships. Want proof? If you have ever worked a 14-hour day, you and I can talk about how much it sucks to be there that long and how all you want to do when you’re done is go home wash up, eat, and sleep. If you haven’t worked a day in your life then you have no real way to relate to me on that subject. It’s the same thing if you have never been in a committed relationship that has gone through love and anger, good days and bad, gain and loss, and so on, then how are you going to talk with me on equal footing about what it is to be — as the Bible says — one flesh with another person?

In the same way, as we relate better with one another through experiences, we also relate better to God through those same experiences if we look at them in the right light. That is because even though it isn’t the same thing as when I talk to you about love, work, or whatever, all of those experiences allow me to better understand God from the standpoint of how He has been involved in life and what His love actually is. I can hear the “huh” over that statement, so let me clear it up a bit. **When you experience some bit of life, if you *look for a lesson or input from God* you will find it and that will help you better relate to God via your experience.**

HEY YOU KIDS!

As an example, once you have gone through a week's hard work and have felt that sense of satisfaction for a job well done and an earned rest you will better understand what God meant when He said that the ground was cursed *for Adam's sake*. I take that to mean that work is actually good for you and is supposed to give you a humble sense of accomplishment. Or when you fall in love you will better understand the kind of love expressed for the church when we are called the bride of Christ. Or when you get around to having kids and you hold your firstborn — fresh and innocent life — it becomes much more real the depth of love and the sacrifice for God to send His son to earth, knowing that He was to be killed — and brutally at that — for people the majority of whom would reject Him.

So with all that being said, finding a deeper and richer relationship with the One who created you should be of a much more lasting value to you than any physical and secular achievements you might think you should be making. And a secondary benefit is gaining a richer deeper connection with those around you and helping them in their relationship with God, too. So for us to ask God for something to do on this earth short of those things is not, in fact, to ask for more love but less; in fact, it is asking for a distraction from your true calling of building your spiritual life in God.

So where does that leave you for your daily life in terms of what to do with yourself? Well, we all have to eat, and we have to go out and do things that just need to get done. So my advice is to try new things and be open to new experiences. When you feel that tugging and are in a place where you are satisfied and happy, stay there and work, but keep your eyes open for anything new that comes along, be it work, hobby, relationship, or whatever. Change keeps the heart fresh and helps you gain new perspective.

But above everything in this physical world, always be mindful of what you are really here for and don't get too attached to the things of this life. I mean haven't you noticed that when you relax and leave things in God's hands, things just fall into place easier than when you try to force your way? †

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Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

A Still Small Voice

Maxie B. Boren

King Ahab, of the kingdom of Israel, reigned from about 875 to 854 B.C. He was the most devilish of all the 19 wicked kings that governed the 10 northern tribes for the 200+ years (933 to 721 B.C.) they existed as a separate entity from the two southern tribes, called Judah. His evil and pernicious ways were exceeded only by his wife, Jezebel, a daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidoians (1 Kings 16:30,31). She was selfish, unscrupulous, vindictive, and cruel — the very epitome of iniquity! Together, Ahab and Jezebel established the worship of Baal in Israel. Such worship often involved the abominable practice of murdering infants and small children in sacrifice, and was usually attended by licentious behavior, such as sexual orgies.

Elijah was the man God selected to proclaim His message to Ahab and all Israel, the thrust of which was undoubtedly that Baal was no more than a mere idol, concocted in the minds of men and fashioned by their hands, devoid of real being or might. Obviously, such a bold and censuring message stirred a violent reaction on the part of the king and Jezebel. They sought the prophet's life, resulting in the famous encounter of Elijah and the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-40).

Efforts were intensified by Ahab and Jezebel to kill Elijah, and the wary prophet, knowing this, went southward to Beersheba, requesting of God that he might die (1 Kings 19:4). Leaving the vicinity of Beersheba, Elijah journeyed forty days and nights to Mt. Horeb, lodging in a cave. God asked him, "*What are you doing here, Elijah?*" (verse 9). In response to the prophet's answer, the Almighty One caused a strong wind to pass through, so powerful as to break up many of the rocks. But God Himself was not in the wind. Then there was a mighty earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake either. After the earthquake, a fire, but neither was God in the fire. Finally, "*a still small voice*" told Elijah to go and anoint Elisha to take his place, assuring the prophet that there were seven thousand others in Israel that had not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:8-18).

While the ministry of Elijah had been accompanied by miracles and demonstrations of God's power, yet at that particular time in his life, God saw fit to speak to him with whispered instructions and assurance that he might complete his work nobly and effectively, as is seen in 1 Kings 21. After placing

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his mantle upon Elisha, Elijah was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire by a great whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-11).

How sad that people know so little about the Bible, and are so easily convinced that regardless of how people live, God is going to take every one to heaven.

With the above scriptural context in mind relating to the circumstance of the “*still small voice*”, you can imagine my surprise at an interview I heard on the ABC “Good Morning America” show recently. The interview took place right after two celebrities had died, one a famous baseball player, and the other, a guitarist and singer for a well-publicized “Rock band”. The two being interviewed were a priest and a rabbi, who had formed sort of a two man coalition “to promote understanding and good will”. To sum it up, they just couldn’t seem to say enough good things about the two departed ones, ignoring their lifestyles, and leaving the impression they were both in heaven — the rabbi taking the “*still small voice*” Scripture completely out of context, and applying it as if God had called the two home in such tones. The hostess of the show then gushed approvingly over their comments. I thought, “How sad that people know so little about the Bible, and are so easily convinced that regardless of how people live, God is going to take every one to heaven.” A rude awakening is coming for the vast majority. How tragic!

Regardless of how rich or famous a person might be, everyone needs to remember what the Bible plainly declares: “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life*” (Galatians 6:7,8; also note Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). †

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A Charge for the Ephesian Elders

Gary Hampton

Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem before Pentecost, so he called for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus. He reminded them of the struggles he faced while in Asia. He served the Lord with a humble attitude, even being moved to tears at times and surviving more than one Jewish plot against his life. Yet, he had faithfully declared the truth to them publicly, in the synagogue, in the school of Tyrannus, and teaching in one house, then another. His preaching extended to Jews as well as to Greeks regarding the need for repentance and faith.

The apostle told the elders he was compelled to go on to Jerusalem, despite knowing he would be arrested and that trials would follow. Paul's greatest concern was not for his safety but with completing the special ministry Jesus had given him — preaching the kingdom. He never expected to see the faces of those elders again. He called them to faithfully witness the content of his preaching at Ephesus. He had preached the whole truth, thus relieving himself of any responsibility for those who might have remained in sin.

He charged them to watch out for their own spiritual well-being, as well as to watch out for every sheep in God's flock at Ephesus.

Paul charged the elders to watch out for their own spiritual well-being, as well as to take care of every sheep in God's flock at Ephesus. This was specifically because they had been given oversight, or made bishops, over the flock purchased with Jesus' blood. False teachers, even from within the eldership, would draw away disciples, thus watchfulness was imperative. Paul urged the elders to remember his own watchful service of three years, during which he warned them day and night, even with crying.

Paul instructed them to trust God and His Word, which would help them grow stronger and inherit eternal life. He reminded them that he worked with his own hands to support himself and did not covet anyone's money. He urged them to labor to support themselves and help the weak, reminding them that Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" After kneeling with them in prayer, Paul tearfully departed (Acts 20:13-38). †

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The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

Kevin L. Moore

From a mountain near Capernaum, the celebrated “Sermon on the Mount” was preached by our Lord Jesus, recorded in chapters 5–7 of Matthew’s Gospel. In the opening words, blessings (“beatitudes”) are pronounced on those exhibiting certain virtues, with the affirmation in 5:5, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*” (NKJV).

The term “blessed” is translated from the Greek *makarios*, signifying those who are “fortunate” and consequently “happy” due to having received a blessing. The blessed ones in this verse are “*the meek*” (*praeis*), namely those whose strength is under control and is exercised in a gentle, kind, benevolent manner. In what way are they blessed? “*For they shall inherit the earth.*”

This statement has generated a great deal of confusion and debate over the centuries, especially when wrenched from its context and interpreted through the distorted sense of popular premillennial theories. But by removing our 21st-century spectacles and viewing the words of Jesus from the perspective of His original audience, the message becomes much clearer.

The blessings of verses 4-9 are bracketed between the repeated blessing of verses 3 and 10: “*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” Matthew alone employs the expression “*the kingdom of heaven,*” which is synonymous with “*the kingdom of God*” (cf. 19:23,24), underscoring the heavenly or spiritual nature of God’s kingdom. This spiritual kingdom, equated with the church that Jesus promised to build (16:18,19), was to be realized within the lifetimes of the Lord’s immediate disciples (3:2; 4:17; 16:28; cf. Mark 1:15; 9:1). Not long after these affirmations were made, the church of Christ was established (Acts 2:37-47) and its members are recognized as citizens of the heavenly kingdom (Colossians 1:13; 4:11; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; etc.).

The promised blessings of Matthew 5:3-10, rather than being withheld from God’s people for millennia into the future, are most certainly available to citizens of the Lord’s kingdom in the here and now. They shall be comforted (2 Corinthians 1:3,4), they shall be filled with righteousness (Romans 1:17; 5:17), they shall obtain mercy (Romans 11:30,31), they shall see (comprehend) God with purity of heart (John 1:18; 14:7-9), and they shall be called sons of God (Galatians 3:26). To then interpret the promise of Matthew 5:5 as something that is unavailable until the distant future in a yet-to-be-established earthly kingdom is to miss the point!

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Note how the Lord goes on to describe the future dwelling place of His faithful ones: *“for great is your reward in heaven...”* (verse 12), i.e., the spiritual realm where the heavenly Father resides (verses 16,34). Note also the contrast Jesus makes further into the discourse: *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (6:19-21).

What, then, is meant by the statement, *“For they shall inherit the earth”*? Throughout the sermon, familiar sentiments are echoed from the Hebrew Scriptures to which the Jewish listeners could relate and readily understand. The audience to whom Jesus was speaking would have recognized the words of Matthew 5:5 as a quotation of Psalm 37:11a. If we want to hear the message as they heard it, we need to appreciate the significance of this familiar passage.

Traditionally, the 37th Psalm is attributed to David and is generally understood as a prophetic exhortation for the Jewish captives in Babylon. The Hebrew term *arets* occurs throughout the text, although it is not consistently translated in many of our English versions. Sometimes it is rendered “land” and sometimes it is rendered “earth”, but by recognizing the fact that it was their homeland from which these exiles were separated, it is apparent that it was “the land” in which they longed to dwell (verses 3,29b) and “the land” to which they would return (verses 9,11,22,29a,34). From this perspective, to *“inherit the land”* is synonymous with God’s favor, protection, blessings, and providential care (verses 3-9,11,16-18,22-29,33,34,37-40).

As a brief side note, the Hebrew word *olam*, translated “forever” in many English versions (verses 18,29), is a simple term of duration that describes something which lasts as long as it is intended to last (cf. Genesis 17:7-19; Exodus 21:6; 28:43; 29:9; 31:16,17). Remember that the land promise was conditioned upon the Israelites remaining faithful to God, and without living up to their end of the agreement, there was no guarantee that it would remain in their possession (Deuteronomy 28:15,63; Joshua 23:11-16; 1 Kings 9:6,7).

Now back to Matthew 5. The Jewish audience to whom Jesus was speaking already inhabited the land, albeit under Roman occupation. Many of their contemporaries (e.g. the Zealots) were attempting to reclaim their sovereignty with aggression and brute force. But Jesus called for a different approach. *“Blessed are the meek,”* i.e. those who refrain from hostility and violence. *“For they shall inherit the earth [ge = land].”* The meek, while inhabiting the land or dwelling upon the earth, are the ones who truly enjoy divine favor, protection, blessings, and providential care (cf. 6:9-13, 25-34).

TEXTUAL STUDIES

The Lord develops this idea further in a later discourse: “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions – and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29,30, cf. Matthew 5:5,12; 19:29). Surely we can appreciate why the meek are so blessed! †

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

Going from or Going to

Wade Webster

Someone observed, “If your treasure is on earth, you are going from it; if it is in heaven, you are going to it” (Blanchard, John. *Gathered Gold*. Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1989, p. 271). Are we going from or going to our treasures? I believe that this is a question that each of us needs to seriously consider.

The New Testament makes it clear that our treasure is supposed to be in heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matthew 6:19-21). It seems clear that many in Jesus’ day had their treasures on the earth. For them, life was all about the treasures that they had here (Luke 12:15). Mammon was their master (Matthew 6:24).

The rich young ruler is a great example of a man who had his treasure upon the earth. Matthew records, “*And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions*” (Matthew 19:16-22). For the rich young ruler, following Jesus was going **from** rather than **to** his treasures.

I am afraid that many today are like the rich young ruler. The journey to heaven would involve going from rather than to their treasures. Their affections are on things on the earth, rather than on things in heaven (Colossians 3:2). Let’s never forget that whatever treasures we have here will one day be left behind. The only things that we will have for eternity are the things that we have laid up in heaven. †

A Young Servant Girl

Bonnie Rushmore

We read in 2 Kings, chapter five, about the biblical account of the healing of Naaman, a captain in the Syrian army. This man was a mighty man of valor who was plagued with leprosy. When we study this passage of Scripture, we concentrate on the miraculous healing of Naaman. We emphasize the importance of following God's instructions. We see the fallacy of pride and the arrogance and the anger that goes hand in hand with pride. However, in this study, I want us to consider verses two and three, *"And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Then she said to her mistress, 'If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.'"*

The Hebrew word for "maid" in this passage can mean a child from infancy to adolescence. This young girl was old enough to serve as a

maid to Naaman's wife, but she was not a young adult. Please consider the following ideas gleaned from this young, Hebrew slave.

She listened to the instruction of her parents. This youthful maiden was blessed with parents who taught her about the one true God — the God of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 4:39). Her parents took to heart the teachings of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. They must have used every waking moment to instill a love for God in her. She carried a love and a faith that went with her when she was abducted by the Syrian army and transported as a slave to Naaman's household.

She understood the power of God and His servants. Although Elisha had not healed a person with leprosy (Luke 4:27), this maid believed in the power of God to do so. She understood the power of God as He created the world (Genesis 1). She believed the words of 1 Chronicles 29:11-12, *"Yours, O*

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Lord, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.” This young maid knew that God could heal Naaman through His prophet, Elisha.

She carried her faith with her into a strange new land. This youthful servant girl did not allow the idolatrous nation to rob her of her belief in God. She maintained her faith in spite of her surroundings.

Even though she found herself in difficult circumstances, she praised God. The young girl was snatched from her family and her country and forced into slavery. Yet, she did not bemoan her lot in life. She did not blame God or say, “Woe is me.” Instead she seized the opportunity afforded her to show the power of the God she served. She suggested that if Naaman were to meet the prophet in Samaria he would be healed. She did not say he could, but had the confidence that Elisha would heal him.

She showed respect to her captors and fulfilled her assigned duties. The maiden desired the best for those with whom she served. She wanted Naaman’s health to be restored.

Undoubtedly, she fulfilled her assigned duties with diligence and without complaint evidenced by the relationship she had with Naaman’s wife. Advice from a surly, uncooperative slave would have been ignored, whereas information from a productive servant was heeded. Naaman’s wife told her husband the suggestion from this young, Israelite, slave girl.

Because a young Israelite girl maintained her faith in God and properly served her mistress, an idolater became a believer in the one true God of the universe. Because a young girl had the courage to speak out about the one true God, a non-believer accepted God.

Each Christian — young and old — can learn much from this unnamed, youthful girl. We need to imitate the actions and attitude of this young girl. We need to seize the opportunities afforded us to speak out about the God we claim to serve. We need to overcome our difficulties and use the trying times to teach someone about the one true God. Let us follow the example of this young girl and many other people of the Bible who stood the test of time to serve their Lord. †

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

The Great Man Job

Vance Hutton

The prophet Ezekiel made reference to three great men in Ezekiel 14:14 and again in 14:20. These men were Noah, Daniel, and Job. Think how these men lived in quite unique times. Their examples were valuable before the world in their days and are still precious to us today. We are thankful the Lord preserved the accounts of their lives for our learning (Romans 15:4). We are to walk in the way of good people (Proverbs 2:20).

Job was one of three men from the Old Testament spoken of in the Book of James. Abraham and Elijah, along with Job, were held up as examples of faith, patience, and prayer. Hebrews 13:7 tells us to follow the faith and consider the conversation or manner of life of great people, and men like Job point us to a higher plane. Note the following thoughts about the man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.

1. A man of purity: We are introduced to him as a man who was perfect and upright. He was blameless, mature, and without moral blemish. He filled the bill of James 1:2-4. He was upright in the sense of walking in the commands of the Lord and in the paths

of righteousness. He had great respect for God in that he feared God (Job 1:1).



This would reference concerning him is repeated in Job 1:8 and Job 2:3. He also eschewed evil, or turned from it. Job promised to follow such a course until the day of his death (Job 27:1-6).

We, too, must live pure lives. In fact, we are to continue to put on the Lord (Romans 13:11-14). We are to go unto holiness (Romans 6:19-22). We are to be changed into the image of our

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Lord from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). Job helps us in this worthy goal.

2. A man of patience: James wrote of the example of the prophets of yesteryear and their struggles and patience through those tough times. Think of the many prophets that would fall into this category. He then told of the great man of God, Job, and his patience that those scattered saints of God had heard about (James 5:10,11). Here was a man who lost almost everything. He lost his children, wealth, and health, but he remained steadfast through his trials. Endurance is one of those precious gems. He did not lose heart in spite of all he suffered. We, too, must develop this trait if we are to live the Christian life successfully (Hebrews 10:23). There was so much that Job was unaware of as he endured. He didn't know that Satan had a special freedom with unleashing his arsenal on him. Satan was relentless in his efforts to bring down Job. We might not know all about our struggles. Let us never grow discouraged, drop from the race, grow bitter, or charge God foolishly.

3. A man of principles: Job was not sinless, but was a man of many great attributes. God referred to him often as His servant. Such are God's greatest people (Matthew 20:26-28). Job was a man of great faith and conviction (Job 1:20, 13:15). He was a family man and a man of worship (Job 1). He was a man of repentance and prayer (Job 4:2). He

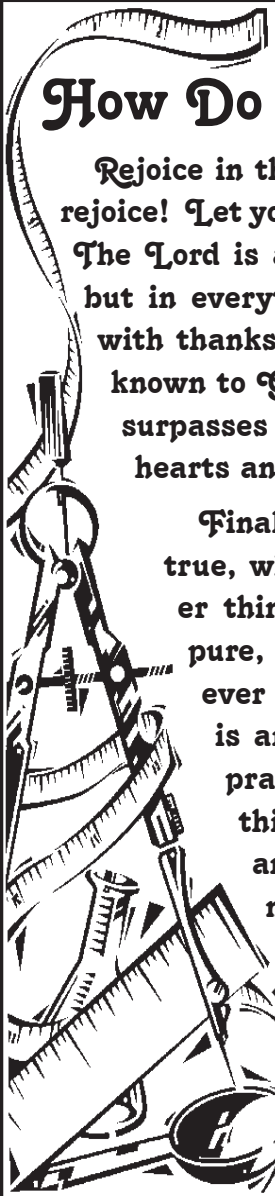
never put his trust in things, and when things were taken from him, he did not give up his faith. He came forth as gold after his trial, as he had predicted (Job 23:10). He endured without the support of family and friends. When we do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, this is praiseworthy of the Lord (1 Peter 2:20).

This great man was blessed much more than before all his struggles (Job 42:10). It always pays to serve God. Let us all remember the great examples of Noah, Daniel, and Job. Rise up, O men of God, and reproduce such great, great men. †

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



Job is named along with other real-life Bible characters — Noah and Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14, 20), which strongly implies that Job was a real-life Bible character, too. Furthermore, The Bible books of Jeremiah (25:20) and Lamentations (4:21) concur with the Book of Job (1:1) that “the land of Uz” was a real, geographical location — even if we are not certain of the location of its ruins today. Real people live in real places; Job lived in Uz.

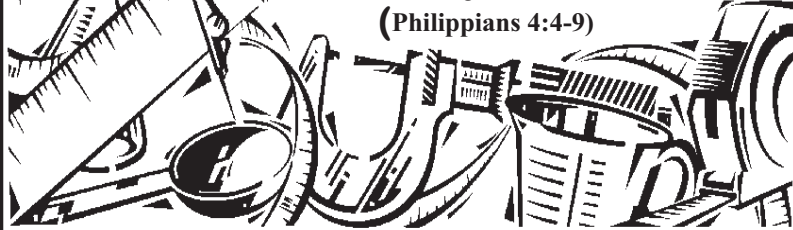


How Do You Measure Up?

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:4-9)





Children of the Bible

Bonnie Rushmore

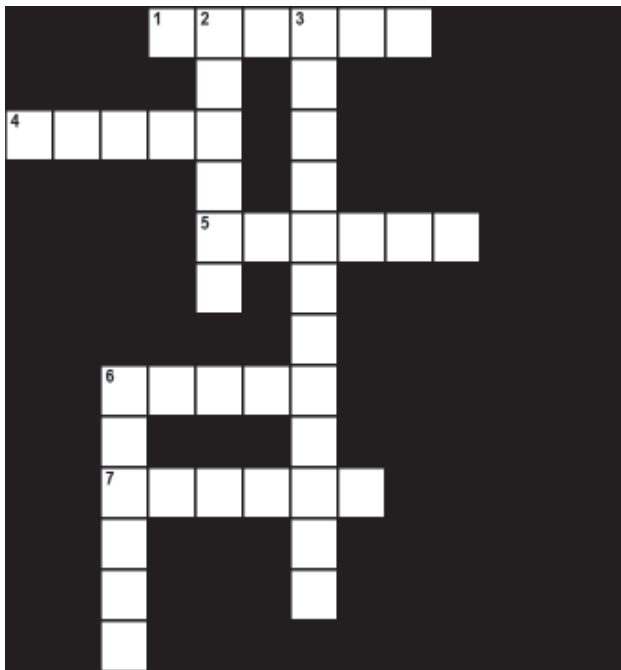
All Scripture references are from the NKJV.

Across

1. Who did the young maid say that the prophet of Israel could heal?
(2 Kings 5:1-3)
4. Name the youth who killed Goliath. (1 Samuel 17)
5. Who did the children call a "bald headed man"? (2 Kings 2:23,24)
6. Name the famous baby born in Bethlehem?
7. Who served in the temple as a child? (1 Samuel 2:18)

Down

2. Name the disciple that said there was a boy with five loaves and two fish to share with the multitude.
(John 6:5-9)
3. Name Jonathan's son who was lame? (2 Samuel 4:4)
6. Who began serving as King at the age of eight?
(2 Kings 22:1)



Are You a Fool?

Dwight Fuqua

Wait a minute! I do not know of anyone who likes to be called a fool. We should not in arrogance or anger call anyone a fool (Matthew 5:22). However, the Bible calls some men fools. This we need to know!

First, there are ATHEISTIC FOOLS. *"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'"* (Psalm 14:1). Atheism, agnosticism, and skepticism are on the increase. But when all men stand before God at the judgment, they will confess Him (Romans 14:11). It is foolish to deny Him now when we will stand before Him then! *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men I will confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32,33).

Second, there are EGOTISTICAL FOOLS. *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"* (Romans 1:22). In their arrogance these think they do not need God's Word. Solomon wrote, *"The way of the fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise"* (Proverbs 12:15). It is foolish indeed to arrogantly turn from God's way. *"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man*

who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Third, there are DISOBEDIENT FOOLS. As the Master stressed the importance of obedience He divided humanity into two classes — the wise and the foolish (Matthew 7:21-27). The unwise builder hears His Word but does not obey it. It is foolish to build one's house (life) on the shifting sand of disobedience. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (verse 21).

Fourth, there are RICH FOOLS. The Master spoke of such a man in the parable in Luke 12:15-21. He left God out of his life. He was satisfied with the material. He gave no thought to spiritual or to eternal things. He lived like he had a perpetual lease on life. He didn't! *"Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?"* (verse 20). It is foolish to live and die unprepared to meet God!

Don't be foolish! Believe in God! Receive His counsel! Obey His will! Put Him first in your life! ✝

Dwight Fuqua preaches for the Findlay congregation in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

HOW DO WE QUENCH THE SPIRIT?

Jerry A. Jenkins

Bible students are very keenly aware that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian in the same manner as the Father and the Son. In apostolic days there were those who received Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 11:15), or the Holy Spirit by the miraculously-imparted manner, received by the “laying on” of the apostles hands (Acts 8:17-19). Today Christians are influenced, not independently, but through the Word.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica he admonished them, “*Quench not the Spirit*” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The word “quench” (*sbennumi*) means “to extinguish.” A form of the word was employed by the foolish virgins to describe what was happening to their lamps because of insufficient oil (Matthew 25:8). One would quench a fire by throwing a wet blanket over it. It is possible to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The context of Paul’s admonition shows it is possible to quench the Spirit in a number of ways:

(1) We quench the Spirit when we despise prophecies. Reference here is to preaching. Evidently there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. Whenever the preaching of the Word is minimized or discounted one is quenching the Spirit.

(2) We quench the Spirit when we do not pray regularly. Paul had enjoined that prayers be without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This does not mean constantly praying, for one must have time to eat, sleep, and work. It does not mean that we are to be in a constant attitude of prayer. It means simply that one is to pray on a regular basis. Daniel prayed without ceasing, as indicated in the statement: “*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days*” (Daniel 6:10).

(3) We quench the Spirit by not rejoicing in every circumstance of life. Our rejoicing is not to be limited to some special occasion or when a noteworthy compliment or gift is given. A Christian constantly finds joy that his sins have been forgiven and that he has a Savior like Jesus. It is the privilege of

BIBLE QUESTIONS

a Christian to rejoice. He has more sources of joy than any other man — sources which do not fail when all others fail.

(4) A fourth manner in which one may quench the Spirit is by a failure to abstain from evil. Paul stated, “*Abstain from every form of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The King James Version states that one is to abstain even from the *appearance* of evil. No Christian is to frequent ungodly places, even though he may not personally be involved in the activities there. †

Jerry A. Jenkins (1936-2010) was the preacher for many years for the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

What Attitude Should the Christian Have toward Racism?”

Mark N. Posey

Christianity was born into a world filled with racial prejudice. It occurred many times, but the most obvious was the attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles. Godliness abhors any assumed racial superiority! The Bible provides us with an “equalization factor” found in Romans 3:9-12,23, “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” This biblical principle is true regardless of race. The element of sin in our lives cuts across economic, racial, and intellectual boundaries.

Christ brought equality, the basis of which is obedience, not skin coloration! Christ has broken down the wall between us (Ephesians 2:14-16), drawing mankind into one body by His death on the cross (Acts 17:26). God is no “*respector of persons*”, but He examines man on the basis of his righteousness (Acts 10:34,35). God makes no distinction on the basis of race and forbids the same in us. In fact, He made a connection between every human being at creation, as proclaimed in Acts 17:26, “*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.*” James taught, “*Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons*” (2:1). In v. 9, he labeled discrimination as sin!

The blood of Christ is contacted in baptism, wherein all barriers are destroyed, with the obedient being made *one in Christ* (Galatians 3:26-28). Peter violated this principle and was reprimanded by Paul (Galatians 2:11). Observe how Jesus responded to all people (Luke 10:30), and let us be motivated to activate the “Golden Rule” by treating others as we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Humility will not allow us to treat any human being as inferior (Philippians 2:3). We must assume the disposition of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-25). The way we deal with this matter could cost us our eternal salvation! †

Colossians 3:15

Ken Tyler

Purpose: To emphasize our need to hear Paul's instructions to the Colossians.

I. "...Let the peace of God rule in your hearts..."

- A. *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6,7).
- B. *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee"* (Isaiah 26:3).
- C. *"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace"* (Numbers 6:24-26).
- D. *"Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them"* (Psalm 119:165).

II. "...ye are called in one body..."

- A. Paul made it plain that we are called by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).
- B. The one body is the church (Colossians 1:18). See also Ephesians 4:4; 1:22,23; 2:16.
- C. When a person obeys the Gospel call the Lord adds him to His church (Acts 2:47).
- D. The Gospel calls each person to believe (John 8:24), repent (13:3,5), confess (Matthew 10:32,33), and be baptized (Mark 16:16).

III. "...and be ye thankful." See also Colossians 3:17; 4:2; 1:12.

- A. *"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Ephesians 5:20).
- B. *"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- C. *"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift"* (2 Corinthians 9:15).
- D. *"...neither were thankful..."* (Romans 1:21).

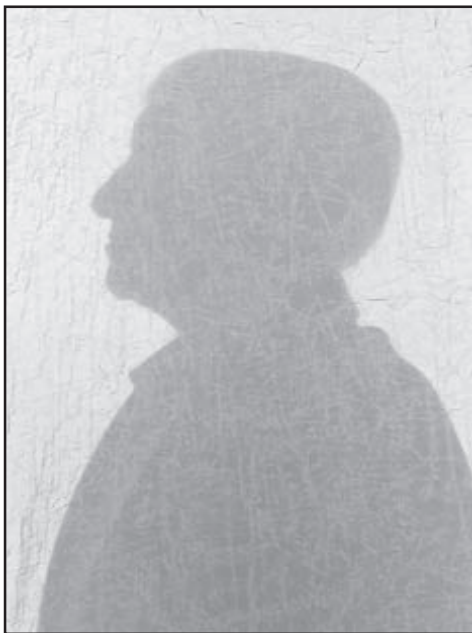
Conclusion: I have three questions for you today. (1) Is the peace of God ruling in your heart? (2) Are you in the one body? (3) Are you thankful? †

WHO AM I IN THE LIFE OF MOSES?

Rebecca Rushmore

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

1. I am the father of Moses (Exodus 6:20).
2. I am the mother of Moses (Exodus 6:20).
3. I am the brother of Moses (Exodus 6:20).
4. I am the sister of Moses (Exodus 15:20).
5. I gave Moses his name (Exodus 2:5-10).
6. I married Moses (Exodus 2:21).
7. I am the father-in-law of Moses (Exodus 3:1).
8. When I led a rebellion against Moses, God caused the ground to swallow my followers and me (Numbers 16:1-33).
9. I refused to let Moses lead the Israelites through my land on the way to the promised land (Numbers 20:14-21).
10. I replaced Moses as the leader of the Israelites (Joshua 1:1-9).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

WHERE AM I IN THE LIFE OF MOSES?

Rebecca Rushmore

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

1. I was born in this land (Exodus 1:1-2:15).
2. My mother placed me in this river to protect me (Exodus 2:1-10).
3. At forty years old I fled my home to this land (Exodus 2:15).
4. While tending sheep here, God appeared to me in a burning bush (Exodus 3:1).
5. God parted the water of this sea so His people could cross on dry land (Exodus 13:18; 14:21-22).
6. I named this place after God told me to strike a rock to provide water for the people (Exodus 17:1-7).
7. Amalek came to fight God's people here (Exodus 17:8).
8. God gave me the Ten Commandments from this mountain (Exodus 19:20-20:17).
9. Here I struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God commanded (Numbers 20:1-13).
10. God allowed me to see the promised land from this place before I died (Deuteronomy 34:1-8).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score:_____



On Air or Online Since 1934

Jody Apple

DOES ANYONE REALLY LISTEN TO RADIO ANY MORE?

Research says **“Yes”**— and the numbers might surprise you.

Do you keep up with current events? You might check network television, cable news, internet, newspapers, mobile news apps, and even your email.

Are you interested in information relating to your physical, social, financial, professional, or spiritual life? You might turn to books, magazines, television, websites, podcasts, or blogs.

So... is anyone listening to radio?

The answer is **“Yes!”**

Consumer research company Arbitron (now Nielson Audio) collects listener data in the United States. In *Radio Today*, their 2013 “in-depth snapshot of radio listening nationwide,” Arbitron reports that “about 92% of consumers ages 12 years and older listen to the radio each week.” That’s about 242 million people — and they’re tuning in an average 2.5 hours per day.

When and where are people listening? The report describes what you probably already know: people tune in at home, at work, and in their cars. Back in 1934, radio was radio.

Today when someone tells you what they heard on a “radio” program, they might not even own a standard AM/FM radio. They might tune in to an HD radio at home or satellite radio in their car.

FROM THE HEART OF...

For some people, “listening to radio” doesn’t even involve an actual radio. They listen to internet (streaming radio) on their computer, tablet, or smartphone.

What about different ages? Is there a particular age group that’s listening a lot more than the rest?

Arbitron’s listener research might surprise you:

- **92% of Millennials (ages 12–34) listen to radio**
- **95% of Generation X (35–49) listen to radio**
- **94% of Baby Boomers (50–64) listen to radio**
- **86% of the Silent Generation (65 and up) listen to radio**

The cultural statistics are interesting, too: Arbitron’s research shows that 92% of African Americans listen to radio, as do 94% of Hispanics. People are listening to radio. So, what does all of this mean for *International Gospel Hour*? It means we should...

- **Keep broadcasting the Word of God on radio**
- **Increase coverage (add new stations)**
- **Extend our reach by using new media effectively**
- **Find ways to attract new listeners, especially non-Christians**

INTERNATIONAL GOSPEL HOUR ADDS NEW TEAM MEMBER

When the West Fayetteville, TN church’s elders left Jody Apple a “please call us” voicemail in December 2010, he thought they might ask him to speak at a VBS or Gospel meeting.

What Jody didn’t know was that IGH speaker Winford Claiborne was facing a serious health issue, and had encouraged elders Mark Massey and Don Wallace to begin looking for his eventual successor. He suggested Jody Apple.

After working in Pennsylvania for twenty-five years, Jody had moved to Knoxville, TN to teach at (what is now) the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies.

Jody faced a dilemma. He loves training future preachers and did not want to give up his teaching role at Southeast — but he was also interested in learning more about this opportunity to preach God’s Word via radio.

Fortunately, the Karns elders (who oversee Southeast), director David Lipe, and West Fayetteville’s elders all agreed to Jody splitting his time between the two ministries.

FROM THE HEART OF...

We are glad to report that during this decision-making process, Winford's doctors finally diagnosed and treated his problem and he began regaining strength. He continues as before — studying, preaching, and broadcasting.

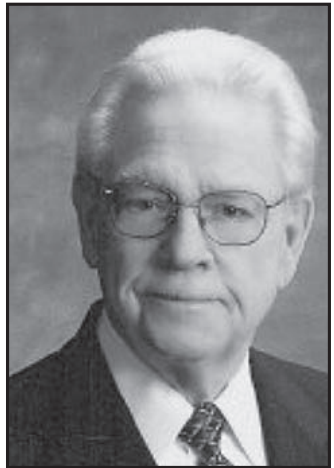
So...what is there for Jody to do right now? A lot! He has an ever growing list of ways to use radio and internet together to reach the lost. Some of that must wait, as the West Fayetteville elders have also tasked him with organizing and increasing our fundraising efforts, revamping and enhancing our web site, and improving our communication with you, our loyal supporters!

Jody looks forward — the Lord willing — to many years working with International Gospel Hour.



YESTERDAY

V.E. Howard began preaching on the radio in 1934, and continued for over 61 years. In 1995 he turned over the work to the West Fayetteville church.



TODAY

Winford Claiborne began preaching in 1943, and spoke on the radio as early as 1947. He became the voice of International Gospel Hour in 1995.

FROM THE HEART OF...



TOMORROW

**Jody Apple
began working part-
time with International
Gospel Hour in August
2013. Currently he
focuses on raising
funds and maximizing
our use of the internet
and social media.**

HERE'S WHAT YOU DID!

You are an important part of all we do at International Gospel Hour. “Church of Christ? I’ve never heard of that.” This is not a surprising remark in some parts of the United States. Far too many cities and towns have few congregations — or none at all.

Millions of people do not know about New Testament Christianity, and they’re not likely to stream through our church building doors any time soon. How can we reach them? How can we encourage them to compare their beliefs with God’s Word? Via radio, we are able to reach people who have at least some interest in truth.

On December 8, a Virginia listener messaged us via our Facebook page:

I just heard your message on The Second Death on WRVA 1140AM in Richmond VA.

I was so glad to hear that unlike many radio preachers you stick only with God’s Word to support your points. So many today are afraid to address the subjects of sin and hell head on. My Pastor has always done that.

FROM THE HEART OF...

Like God told Elijah that there were 7,000 more. Well I believe I've found one of them.

Please continue proclaiming the truth of the Word and I'll do my best to be a good Berean and check out all you say by the Word. I'll also let the station manager know how much I liked the broadcast. God bless!

...“about 92% of consumers ages 12 years and older listen to the radio each week.” That’s about 242 million people — and they’re tuning in an average 2.5 hours per day.

Doesn't Richmond have any congregations? Yes, a few — a very small number of Christians compared with the 1.2 million people living in the Richmond metropolitan area. But because you support International Gospel Hour, we can “visit” the home of this man who might have never visited our worship services or Bible classes (yet!). He is hearing the truth, thanks to you.

Our part? Study, write lessons, record, broadcast, respond to listeners, create website content, raise support, and keep in touch with you. Your part is just as important — because you make this work happen with your generous contributions! Thank you for helping us spread the Gospel of Christ Jesus!

Finally, we ask you to pray for International Gospel Hour. Pray for our elders' wisdom; pray for brother Winfred's strength; pray for our fundraising efforts; pray for Jody's work; pray for our staff's continued work; and never forget to pray for our listeners! ✝

International Gospel Hour, P.O. Box 118, Fayetteville TN 37334; InternationalGospelHour.com; [Facebook.com/InternationalGospelHour](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalGospelHour); JodyApple@InternationalGospelHour.com

Radio Is Alive and Well!

Shouldn't we utilize every form of media that has the capacity to reach today's massive and diverse population? That includes radio.

THERE IS NO TIME FOR APATHY IN THE 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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ONLINE BOOK STORE Hundreds of religious publications (books, pamphlets & tracts) and *The Voice of Truth International* magazine, written by faithful members of the churches of Christ, are available online at **Gospel Gazette Online** (www.GospelGazette.com) or **World Evangelism** (www.WorldEvangelism.org) by selecting “store”. Call (662) 283-1192 or email bookstore@gospelgazette.com for a free printed catalog.

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Gospel Gazette Online

Serving an international readership with the old Jerusalem Gospel via the Internet

Gospel Gazette Online is a 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 speaking clearly, loudly, and biblically for years 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; website: 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! This scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God’s Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of The Voice of Truth International is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with \$40 a month, to cover the \$10,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

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

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

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

Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

Website: WorldEvangelism.org

Dear Brethren:

- ☐ I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, *The Voice of Truth International*. Enclosed is my check for \$15.00 for four issues, or \$25.00 for eight issues. My address is given below.
- ☐ I want to order the complete set of the volumes that are still in print (76 issues) for the reduced price of \$2.00 per copy. My address is given below.
- ☐ Please send special prices for WBS teachers and their students.
- ☐ I want to MAKE A GIFT subscription of *The Voice of Truth International*. Enclosed is my check for \$15.00 for four issues, or \$25.00 for eight issues. The address is given below.
- ☐ I want to send \$30.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed (quarterly). Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way. Or you may send one payment of \$350.00 per year for four issues. This will help us to send more copies to the mission fields.
- ☐ We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.
- ☐ As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 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 stating your wishes in an envelope, along with your check, to the following address.)

Attn: Byron Nichols
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Box 11218
Springfield, MO 65808

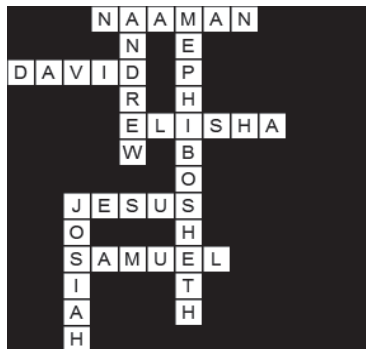
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 27)

1. False.
2. Edify our neighbor.
3. No.
4. We can learn from the Old Testament and thus have hope when we learn how God has always kept His promises in the past. The Old Testament also points us to Christ.
5. Glorify God.
6. Be likeminded.
7. He became a servant to the Jews in order to confirm God's promises to the fathers.
8. Glorify God.
9. Psalm 18:49.
10. Deuteronomy 32:43.
11. Praise the Lord.
12. Isaiah 11:10.
13. Jesus.
14. Joy, peace.
15. Hope, hope.

Bible Find (page 97)



Who Am I? (page 102)

Amram, Jochebed, Aaron, Miriam, daughter of Pharaoh, Zipporah, Jethro, Korah (with Dathan and Abiram), Edom, Joshua

Where Am I? (page 103)

Egypt, Nile River (name not found in all translations, use map), Midian, Horeb, Red Sea, Massah and Meribah, Rephidim, Mount Sinai, Kadesh, Mount Nebo

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



Are You Listening?

On Air or Online Since 1934

DOES ANYONE REALLY LISTEN TO RADIO ANY MORE?

Research says **“Yes”** — and the numbers might surprise you.

Do you keep up with current events? You might check network television, cable news, internet, newspapers, mobile news apps, and even your email.

Are you interested in information relating to your physical, social, financial, professional, or spiritual life? You might turn to books, magazines, television, websites, podcasts, or blogs.

So... is anyone listening to radio?

The answer is **“Yes!”**

Consumer research company Arbitron (now Nielson Audio) collects listener data in the United States. In *Radio Today*, their 2013 “in-depth snapshot of radio listening nationwide,” Arbitron reports that “about 92% of consumers ages 12 years and older listen to the radio each week.” That’s about 242 million people — and they’re tuning in an average 2.5 hours per day.

When and where are people listening? The report describes what you probably already know: people tune in at home, at work, and in their cars. Back in 1934, radio was radio.

Today when someone tells you what they heard on a “radio” program, they might not even own a standard AM/FM radio. They might tune in to an HD radio at home or satellite radio in their car.

- **92% of Millennials (ages 12–34) listen to radio**
- **95% of Generation X (35–49) listen to radio**
- **94% of Baby Boomers (50–64) listen to radio**
- **86% of the Silent Generation (65 and up) listen to radio**

Millions of people do not know about New Testament Christianity, and they’re not likely to stream through our church building doors any time soon. How can we reach them? How can we encourage them to compare their beliefs with God’s Word? Via radio, we are able to reach people who have at least some interest in truth.